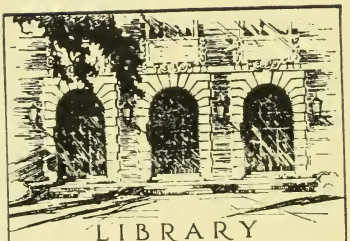

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WHITEFRIARS;

OR,

THE DAYS

OF

CHARLES THE SECOND.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

"As in a magic mirror, I will give you back the very hue and form of a departed age; the whims, the passions, the crimes, the virtues, the subtleties, the very personages." *Greybeard's Warning.*

VOL. II.

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CHARLES THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

THE POPISH PLOT.

THE colonel and Mervyn now directed their steps westward, and were turning into the Mall, when they met Oates in full canonicals. The two worthies greeted each other with infinite glee; and Jew as he seemed, the worthy doctor did not disdain to take Blood's arm, and parade himself along,—to the great admiration of the passers, who ascribed it to Christian humility, or concluded he was making a convert.

Mervyn followed his benevolent master with the seemingly voluntary steps of a man walking to execution, because he knows that he cannot resist.

They now proceeded to a money-changer, who, for the convenience of the profligate court and of his own, dwelt at the sign of the Brass Balls, in St. Martin's Lane, where Mervyn saw them present a piece of paper, and receive in return a heavy bag of gold, which was divided between them by the two dignitaries. From the money-changers, they returned down Whitehall to the Mall, and continued talking, in a low but deeply-interested tone. Mervyn understood but little of what they said; but he heard Blood inquire if the yeast were working; to which question Oates replied that Kirby, the chemist, had broken the matter to the king, who affected to make light of it altogether; but that Dr. Tongue intended to renew the subject on his majesty's morning walk, which he usually attended to receive commands about the royal laboratory.

As the two friends discussed this subject, they entered the Mall, where, from the number of glittering cavaliers and masked ladies abroad, they concluded that the king had made his appearance. They took a station under a mulberry-tree, where some persons were congregated round a woman singing ballads, and shortly after, Mervyn saw a group of some twenty gentlemen, very richly dressed, and all bareheaded, approaching rapidly down the Mall. Among these he readily distinguished the tall, swarthy figure of the king, who wore his hat and a jewelled tuft of feathers. He seemed walking,

or rather striding, at a rate which had evidently put some of the courtiers out of breath, and he looked vexed, which might readily be accounted for, as Dr. Tongue was by his side, talking away with great earnestness.

The royal group approached, and as the king passed without observing them, Blood stepped boldly forward, and, bowing in an oriental style, exclaimed, "Vivat Rex!"

"A Polish Jew?" said Charles, pausing, and looking at him with curiosity. "Well—vivat Judæus! But, friend, it seems if divers of my well-wishers have their own way, you will soon cry 'Vivat' to tickle a pair of longer ears. In brief, Tongue," he continued, turning to the divine, "the sum of your discourse is—there is a plot afoot by that exceedingly happy and highly tolerated people, the Catholics, to make a vacancy by cutting my throat, and to set my brother on the throne. There is a general revolt, and I know not how many invasions, planned by Jesuits and others, who shall be nameless. Now all this is enough to frighten me out of my appetite, which I take not kindly of a man who understands chemistry, and it is altogether too great a matter to be discussed before dinner."

"Please your majesty—," began Dr. Tongue, when the king interrupted him.

"Zounds, man alive, understand us—you are imposed on!" he exclaimed. "And I have no time to waste on any man's follies but my own."

"In God's name, sire, let us sift this pretended plot to the bottom," said the Duke of Buckingham, who was of the train. "We may chance to find some pearls among the chafings of an oyster. Moreover, it would do your majesty incalculable advantage to have it believed that the papists are in conspiracy against your life—as my Lord Danby seems to think by his sweet smile."

"And pending such dangerous conspiracies and horrible massacreing plots, my liege," said the Earl of Danby, with his crafty smile, "the maddest parliament on earth cannot refuse your majesty supplies for our present military power, and perchance an increase instead of a disbanding, seeing we have two such potent enemies to fight against as the pope and the devil."

"Excellently good, gentlemen," said Charles, seating himself in a rustic chair under the mulberry-tree. "But it is dangerous sport setting one's neighbour's house on fire to warm one's own. But 'slife, Master Tongue, we are something fevered with this morning's hot tennis work; and how comes it, Rochester, you look so like your own ghost?"

"I was at my devotions so late last night, sire,"

replied the nobleman, whose complexion was, indeed, ashy pale: "for I am papistical enough to be a jolly friar."

"So, then, your majesty will run the gauntlet of these shocking, execrable, popish conspiracies?" exclaimed Dr. Tongue—"yea, be as it were the target for a thousand arrows shot from invisible bows, but all aimed at your sacred life, and honour, and dominion."

"Faith, no, I had rather reign like John Lackland, with my crown at the pope's footstool—Antichrist as you call his reverence in your opiate sermons, Tongue," replied Charles, glancing with a smile among his courtiers, who had formed a half-circle round his chair. "Why, man, I nothing doubt thy very natural wish to be a dean, but—a word to the wise—this is not the way to make thee one. I have not so much leisure as to waste it on every cock-and-bull story a parson may chance to hear in a fit of the muddles."

"Nay, but, sire, do but hear the plain straightforward narrative of that godly man, and zealous lover of your majesty's service, Dr. Titus Oates," said Tongue, with extreme earnestness.

"Indeed, my liege, it will please neither parliament nor rabble if we seem too remiss in making at least inquiry into the truth of these horrible statements," said Lord Danby.

"It will not do, Danby," replied the king, look-

ing at him with a significant smile. "If you raise the devil, you will be like the magician's foolish scholar, and not being able to find him work enough, he will tear his summoner to pieces."

"We may, at least, without danger examine this alleged witness before the council, and set men's minds at rest," said Danby. "I am told my Lord Shaftesbury intends to badger me about it to-night. Where might a messenger find this Oates, Tongue?"

"Not far from this spot, my lord," said the divine, "for, in good faith, methinks I see him in that throng to the left, and will if it please you call him?—Dr. Oates!"

"Heor!—ready to obey the call of the Loard and the trumpet of Gibeon," exclaimed the reverend personage thus addressed, stepping boldly forth.

"He hath a villanous mien," said Charles, in a low voice to Danby. "And, moreover, hear ye not?—his voice hath the saints' twang?—can good come out of Nazareth?—And so, reverend sir, your name is Oaths?"

"Oates, an't please your majesty," replied the doctor. "The Loard be praised for that and all other his goodness."

"And your mother too, ungrateful prodigal!" said Charles, reproachfully. "But 'tis well you thank Heaven, though you have so little cause.—And you are the gentleman, professing to have discovered all these wondrous secrets, by living among

the Jesuits, and aiding and abetting in all their conspiracies, and plans, and plots, for the overthrow of the reformed religion, and a massacre of nine millions of innocent protestants by some sixty bloodthirsty papists?"

"I did live among them, sire, but as David among the Canaanites," replied Oates, raising his eyes and pressing his heart. "But God and his holy angels know that I never changed my religion, but went among them for the sole purpose of betraying them."

"Why then, man, you are a black villain, a cursed Judas! But think not I will offer the thirty pieces of silver for innocent blood," said Charles, sternly. "Come, gentlemen, we will hear no more from such a perjurous rascal. Tongue, I never thought thee otherwise than an ass, but this demonstrates thee one as clearly as any formula of algebra."

"But, my liege, the populace will not be thus satisfied," said Danby. "We must not seem to stifle this matter; it should be solemnly investigated, and perhaps we may find at the bottom what will serve your majesty's interests. The council sits this evening, and if you have any proofs that will stand sifting, produce them there."

"And if, my loard, I do not prove a most monstrous black conspiracy, a Jesuitical, abominable, popish——" began Oates with unabated effrontery.

"Peace! we have had enough of this holy Billingsgate," interrupted Charles. "Danby, if you

will play with hot irons, marvel not if you burn your fingers: but I'll have nothing to do with it. Come, my lords, we will on, and leave this reverend man to hatch his crocodile's egg without the sun of our favour."

The king rose and moved sharply forward, followed by the whole court, and Brother Titus was left alone, excepting a few of the rabble who continued gazing at him from a distance, and whispering. After a moment's deliberation, Oates turned aside, and rejoined the Polish Jew.

"Courage, brother! never pucker thy ugly face to frighten the devil," exclaimed Blood. "I see thou hast not found such a brilliant reception as thy virtues entitle thee to; they do not know thee as yet. We shall see the day when the scarlet lady herself will shake on her seven hills to hear thy name."

"Nay, 'tis a fair enough beginning; the acorn grows to an oak at last," said Oates, wiping his brow. "I only want to set the matter afloat on men's talk; and now I am going straight as a witch's wand before Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, lest the court suddenly stoifle me and the ploat together."

Blood highly commended this notion, but as he was not desirous of sharing the public attention, he agreed with Oates to follow at a distance. The small knot of rabble had by this time increased to

a considerable crowd, and as soon as the doctor moved they began to follow, though without distinctly comprehending why or whither. But a London mob is inexhaustible in curiosity, and not to be deterred by any trouble or peril in gratifying it. Blood and Mervyn, whose curiosity was also strongly excited, mingled with the mob, and succeeded in squeezing their way into the justice-room.

Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, whose name was doomed to carry so tragical a sound in the ear of posterity, was one of the most popular magistrates of the day, and the only one whose suspected leanings to popery were pardoned by the mob, in consideration of the extreme severity with which he administered the laws against papists. He was a man of singular habits, but of great courage, and unsuspected integrity. He almost alone of the magistracy, during the panic caused by the great plague, remained in the diseased city, and by his vigorous severity kept order in his vast and desperate district. He was knighted by Charles for these services, and though a man of a harsh and melancholy disposition, continued a favourite of the populace through all the changes of that eventful period, by the same inflexible qualities which had first won him their admiration.

Sir Edmundbury was a remarkable-looking man, and bore traces of his character imprinted on his whole appearance. He was tall, dark, and hard-

featured, but his height was diminished by a constant stoop, and there was something severe and sad in his down-drawn lips and knit brow. He was attired with studied plainness, and wore a broad hat with a gold band, the large flaps of which added a darker shade to his austere countenance. His hair was long, lank, and iron-gray, and on this occasion there was a troubled expression in his sunk gray eyes, as if in presage of the dreadful fate which awaited him.

"What-a-mercy! what manner of hubbub is this, officers?" said the magistrate, glancing at the rabble which tumultuously flooded the bar. "What do ye want, my masters? Let the broken heads speak first—fie! a rioter in canonicals!"

"Your worship, neither I nor these worthy brothers in Christ are such," replied Oates, loudly. "I am come to make a deposition before your worship and God Almighty, concerning a dreadful plot of the paupishers, which it hath been His pleasure I should be the earthly instrument of discovering."

"Methinks a man of your reverend garb should have put that great name first," said Godfrey, slightly raising his hat at the word. "But as you please. Yet I had rather you took the affair before some other justice, as you know what the vulgar say—that I favour papists on account of some kindness rendered me by his royal highness—though it is false."

"For that selfsame reason that your impartiality cannot be questioned, I have selected you from all the magistrates of this great sinful Sodom and Gomorrah," replied Oates. "And I call upon you by the oath you have taken to administer the king's justice, to take my affidavit anent this horrible ploat of the Jesuits to overthrow the church of God, and introduce Arbitrary Power and the Inquisition in this hitherto free and gospel land."

"I do not refuse; I have not the power to refuse," replied the justice. "But I would advise you to weigh well your words before you give them forth; for the beginning of contention is like the letting out of waters, and no man knows whither they may go."

"Here then is my written deposition, my testimony against unbelieving Ahab," said Oates, triumphantly producing a sealed paper. "I am ready to make oath to the truth of all the charges herein contained, worshipful sir, and, my strength coming from above, will prove them before the parliament and people of England. I have been in the camp of the enemy, and have brought such news as, like a peal of thunder, shall rouse Israel, sleeping on his arms."

"What mean you, sir? in what camp?" replied Sir Edmundbury. "Am I to understand that you have spied out some armed force in the heart of this kingdom, and come to aver the same by oath?"

" Yea, verily," said the unabashed Oates, " I *have* spied out an enemy in the heart of the land—one which has already posted himself in our citadels and high places, and bribed our watchers on the hills; an enemy not armed in steel, but in falsehood; not wielding spears, but ploats; not wearing the sword nor the helmet, but the dagger and the mask:—the Jesuits!—the Jesuits! I have dwelt long enough in their camp to learn all their monstrous treasonable ploats, and I have now shaken the dust from my sandals as a testimony against them for ever."

" And this sealed paper contains your depositions or accusations?" said Sir Edmundbury, silencing the murmurs of the rabble with a look. " It will not do, sir. I will not suffer you to make oath on its contents unless I know them. Nought shall be done in so weighty a matter darkly. And yet methinks it were fitter you took your papers and yourself before the council or my Lord Chancellor, who are from their dignity more suitable magistrates to investigate a charge of such high moment, involving the safety of the state?"

" Your worship then refuses to take my affidavit?" said Oates, and the mob raised a clamour which was deepened by Blood's stentorian voice shouting what afterwards became the war-cry of his party, " No Popery! No Popery!"

This yell was instantly echoed in every variety of dissonant voice, and Sir Edmundbury turning

sharply round, called out, " Constables, seize these brayers, and off to Bridewell with them, for rioting in court, in contempt of his majesty's justice."

This threat and the known severity of the man, produced instant silence.

" I do not refuse, Doctor Oates, since that is your name, to take your deposition, or any other man's," said the justice; " but I will not suffer myself to be used as a blind instrument. Read your deposition, and take as many oaths to it as you like."

Oates asked nothing better, than to thus throw upon Sir Edmundbury the blame of divulging his narrative before the council had examined it. He read in his loud coarse tones, amidst the most eager silence of all present, the outlines of that terrible plot which was destined to shed so much blood ere it coiled itself up in peace.

The groundwork of this plot was the supposed and implicitly credited fact that the catholic church was engaged in a strenuous effort to crush the great northern heresy. This no doubt was true, and the same might be affirmed in general of all subsequent times, and certainly with much more emphasis in that age which beheld the Reformation extirpated in the south of Europe, and gradually narrowing in the north. The chief ministers and propagandists of the Roman church in working these wonders, were undoubtedly the Jesuits, the most prudent, subtle, ambitious, and successful of all the

great societies forming the armies of catholicism throughout the globe. The English people of the seventeenth century, educated in the narrowest and fiercest fanaticism, considered this society as little better than a direct emanation from the devil, and its members were endowed in the popular imagination, with little less power and inclination to do evil than the fiends who surround the throne of Beelzebub himself. The vulgar hatred represented them as the cause of all the evils which befel the nation at home and abroad. It was the Jesuits who turned the swords of catholic Spain and France against the great bulwark of heresy; the Jesuits who destroyed London by fire, and devasted its population with the plague; the Jesuits who caused the perpetual quarrels arising between Charles and his subjects;—for it was tacitly understood by the masses that their king, his brother, and the court were engaged heart and soul, in the stupendous project of the re-establishment of popery.

It was on these foregone conclusions, already silently grounded in the national mind, that Oates built his wild and incongruous structure, which, cemented as it was with blood and terror, finally fell by its own weight, leaving a ghastly ruin to warn the future, if nations ever gathered wisdom from experience.

To accomplish their grand plan, the Jesuits, according to Oates, found it necessary to destroy all

the barriers of English liberty, and pave their way with the ruins of the boasted English constitution. But it seemed they suspected that the king's waywardness and epicurean indifference made him an unfit instrument of their designs, and it was determined to get rid of him, and to substitute the Duke of York, who was allowed to be a papist to the backbone. To effect this object, Oates accused Father La Chaise, the French king's confessor, or Le Shee as he called him, of having lodged two thousand pounds in the hands of a London goldsmith, to bribe a murderer; Oliva, and the Spanish Jesuits, he added, granted the same sum; the Benedictines, being poor, merely subscribed their prayers. There was to be a rising in Ireland, a grand massacre of the protestants there, and the French were to assist with a large army. In England the Duke of York was to dissolve the parliament, and assume all the powers of government in his own hands, France and Spain assisting with arms and money. The great facility with which the nation changed its religion at the bland persuasions of axe and fagot, under Mary, was to form the model and encouragement of the Jesuits in their grand labour, and the same potent argument was to be employed in converting England again to the faith.

Oates further deposed that a general consultation of the Jesuits was held in May, 1678, in London, at the White Horse Tavern, which divided itself

into five or six minor sections, in as many apartments, all debating on the best means to murder the king and bring about the other desirable results. According to the testimony of the reverend witness, he—though suspected, and even personally maltreated by the provincial of the English Jesuits, Van Huysman—was employed to carry tickets of resolves from company to company. But he declined to state, in his affidavit, what these resolves were. He declared, however, that Sir George Wakeman, the queen's physician, was to have fifteen thousand pounds for poisoning the king, a sum which he had received in part, and that Coleman, the Duchess of York's secretary, was in treasonable correspondence with France. Oates also intimated that the fire of London was caused by the Jesuits, for the sake of plunder, and to promote confusion. He affirmed that the pope had in grand consistory decided that the realm of England was forfeit to him as heretical; and though he certainly intended to make the Duke of York a sort of crowned viceroy, his Holiness had exercised his sovereignty, by appointing a vast number of lay officers, among whom Oates had carefully included some of the principal catholic noblemen and gentry.

Sir Edmundbury's surprise and even terror increased with every word of this extraordinary deposition, but his rigid countenance showed no emotion whatever, while the groans and exclamations

of the auditors evinced the intensity of theirs. Blood himself was amazed and somewhat alarmed at the multiplicity and magnitude of the charges. Oates's happy impudence, however, proved that he had been selected for his task by men perfectly acquainted with the instruments they judged necessary for their work.

"I receive your deposition, as I needs must, Mr. Oates," said the magistrate, after a brief pause; "you may take your oath; but whether you are a most monstrous perjurer, or the saviour of this nation, God alone knows, and time will show."

"And rest assured, worthy Sir Edmundbury," said Oates, kissing the sacred book, without flinching, "that by this sign I shall conquer—and the corn and wine are to him who reaps and vintages as well as to him who sows and to him who prunes."

"For my part," replied Sir Edmundbury, with prophetic gloom, "*I shall have no thanks for my pains, and, I believe, I shall be the first martyr.*"

Oates smiled, somewhat darkly, and began repeating the solemn words of the adjuration after the clerk, when Blood whispered Mervyn—"Let us out and wait him there—I shouldn't wonder if the roof were to fall!" And he shouldered his way very rudely out, followed closely by the amazed acolyte, who, recollecting that Oates was at St. Omer, in May, 1678, had his own private reasons for doubting the stability of the justice-room.

CHAPTER II.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

THE colonel halted in the vestibule of the office, which was closely besieged by a dense throng, whispering and discussing the important revelation, as it was communicated to them by the more fortunate listeners within. Mervyn had no time to vent his surprise in words. The doctor followed almost immediately, having, as he expressed it, set the stone a rolling, and was received with loud manifestations of gratitude, respect, and curiosity. He separated himself with difficulty from the crowd, and bestowing upon them a gracious benediction, proceeded down the street amidst deafening hurrahs. He soon, however, thought proper to elude this popularity, by slipping down an alley leading to the

Strand, where he was rejoined by Blood and his young protégé.

"What think you of matters now, master colonel?" he exclaimed, in a tone of triumph. "My Loard Shaftesbury scarce thought me worth the honour of his contempt some few hours since, but what now? In a fortnight I shall have prouder heads than his ducking to me, or I will bring them to the block!"

"I would, then, thou couldst include mine enemy, old Ormonde, and his spitfire son, in the list," said Blood, grinning savagely. "But, doctor, since our affairs are in such a prosperous train you must come with me to my poor house in Alsatia, and dine on such hermit fare as an outlawed man can muster."

Oates readily consented, and the hospitable colonel called a sculler which, at his direction, rowed them down the river.

Mervyn's eyes were now in some measure unsealed, and the light which was breaking in on his understanding was any thing but welcome. The extraordinary revelations which Oates had made, coupled with his own dim ideas of the drift of the Jesuitical policy, confused at once his judgment and his feelings. On one hand were all the prejudices of his youth, the love and reverence in which he had been educated; on the other a vision of horrors, of dark and iniquitous policy, which he knew not

how to connect. His ignorance of the world in general, and of the actual position of men and events, contributed to suspend his decision and to perplex his mind, almost beyond the power of forming any opinion of the truth or falsehood of Oates's statement. Still he had an instinctive abhorrence of that bad man, and had he been aware of the terrible consequences which were to flow from his perjuries, it is probable that nothing but actual force could have induced him to follow his fortunes farther. As it was, he seemed rather bewildered into non-resistance, than submitting to an authority which he recognised.

"Yonder is my house, or mansion I may call it, for such it hath been in its palmy days," said the colonel, pointing over the dancing waves to an antique and ruinous-looking building with a high balcony, which seemed hanging over the river, and which was crowned with a mass of tall chimneys. It was an isolated building, surrounded by a high garden-wall on the land side, which separated it from the wildest and most haggard district of the Friary. Mervyn thought he had never seen so dreary and comfortless a dwelling. The wooden work and pillars of the balustrade seemed all rotten and falling down, the latticed windows were broken and stuffed with rags, as if to exclude the cold winds of the river; indeed the whole mansion seemed only to stand until a strong gale came to blow it down.

The original frame of the house had been altogether wood-work, but it seemed to have been patched and repaired, at some remote period, with bricks which lay in ruinous piles on the walls and architraves.

Mervyn shuddered as he contemplated his future home.

"And was this august building part of your inheritance, colonel?" said Oates, laughing. "If so, I marvel not his Grace of Ormonde hath left you quiet possession of it."

"Nay," said Blood, laughing too, "I do but call it mine to take from it the reproach of belonging to no one; but thank Heaven, I pay neither rent nor taxes for it. Indeed I do not know its owner's name, nor if it hath any. I took possession of it because no man else had courage enough to live rent free at the risk of being frightened to death by the ghost of some old miser, who once lived in it; ay, and died in it, before he was due in death's books by fair computation."

"How mean you, brother?" said Oates, more seriously.

"Why, it was deserted on account of some superstitious story concerning its former inmate," replied the colonel—"some horrible legend, which makes even the most houseless wretch in the Friary prefer the stormy heavens for a covering, to any shelter which its broken roof can afford. They call it the Haunted House, and it has been tenantless these thirty years, until I (he continued lowering his

voice), who seek not men's herding, chose it for my den, wherein I have spent many a quiet night, with my good conscience for company. Yet 'tis something dismal to be alone there, and this boy's society will be of infinite satisfaction to me."

"What story do you speak of, sir? why do you call it the Haunted House?" said Mervyn, earnestly.

"But are you not afraid to let these men hear you?" whispered Oates, glancing at the watermen, two strong, ill-looking fellows, in a garb which was something between a tattered livery and a sailor's.

"Not I, faith; they are both honest fellows—that is, diabolical rascals," replied Blood. "They may be of some future use to us, Oates; for one of them is a discarded footman of the catholic Lord Bellasis, for whom your deposition is to procure a lodging in the Tower."

"Well, what haunts this house? ghost or devil?" said Oates.

"'Tis said," replied Blood, "that an old miser, the last possessor of my mansion, was therein murdered by his own and only son, a profligate wretch, to obtain the unhappy old man's gold."

"Alack, that a man should toil all his life merely to quicken his own destruction," exclaimed Mervyn, shuddering.

"You will generalize that observation when you get older," replied the colonel. "Meanwhile this legend diffuses a salutary terror round my abode, which makes me enjoy a solitude to which the

deserts of sandy Arabia are populous. And now I must turn pilot, for it asks some small dexterity to land when the tide's in."

The colonel then posted himself at the helm, and directing the men to lull their oars, turned the sculler, and shot right across the water with great dexterity, although the tide ran high on their broadside. As they approached the shore, the ruffianly lanes and haggard dwellings of Alsatia became distinct; but Mervyn's attention was absorbed in the mysterious mansion which it seemed he was to consider as his home. They were steering under the ruinous balcony, towards a dark archway, fashioned in the basement story, which terminated in a flight of stone steps, leading up to a massive door, barred and cross-barred with iron. Blood explained that when the tide was in, the archway always had sufficient water to carry small-craft to the stairs, but when out no one could enter without wading to the neck in mud. As he spoke, they shot rapidly under the arch, and in a moment the sculler touched on the steps. Mervyn then perceived that a faint light fell from an iron-grated lattice above.

Blood dismissed the sculler as soon as his guests were on the stairs, and taking a massive key from his doublet, and slipping two heavy bolts, he opened the door, and bade them welcome to his castle. "I doubt not," he added jestingly, "but that the ghost will make you welcome too; for I

shall not treat you at his expense, unless he grudge us the shelter of his old leaky roof. And that you may know him for the master of the house if you chance to meet him, I will describe him as the tradition runs. 'Tis a lean, shrivelled, sad old man, with a broken neck, his head hanging on his left shoulder, and dressed in gray linsey-woolsey, with red stockings, and leaden buckles —which I suppose is the traditionary recollection of him as he appeared at the crowner's quest."

As the colonel gave this inviting description of the inmate of his establishment, they entered a dilapidated hall, surrounded by a wooden gallery or corridor, on which opened the doors of the principal apartments. The second story was raised above, on massive carved pillars, communicating by a staircase with the first, so that the roof of the hall ascended to the height of the whole building, and was elaborately ornamented with dark oak carvings. Light was originally admitted down the staircase from an octagon in the roof, composed of carved compartments, with a bull's eye of stained glass in the middle; but time and decay had caused many fissures in the roof, and the sun streamed in various directions among the dusty timbers which crossed it. The whole mansion, ruinous as it was, bore tokens of having once been the residence of an opulent family, whose riches, indeed, had left their taste in arrear. The walls were of black mahogany, very curiously but uncouthly carved,

and the river damps had covered them with a fine white moss. The floor had been inlaid with coloured stones, but was now broken, and in some parts overgrown with long lank grass, and Mervyn, as he entered, slipped with no very comfortable sensations, over a frog which lay couched in his path.

Ascending a broad flight of stairs, massively balustraded, they entered an apartment to which Blood guided them, slamming the door after him with a clap which startled a whole tribe of swallows in the roof above. They were now in a large square apartment, presenting an aspect of dreariness and desolation which sunk like a weight on Mervyn's young heart. The windows were high, and jealously barred with iron, admitting through their narrow panes a sort of foggy daylight. The walls had once been painted in distemper with divers groups from heathen mythology, but the damp and injuries of time had almost effaced the designs, and only left some random legs, hands, arms, and drapery, with one or two masses of clouds and foliage. There were few or no signs of human habitation, except the blackened hearth, a heap of straw, which looked like the lair of a wild beast, some fagots, a cloak, and a musketoon over the carved mantelpiece.

Blood laughed at the dismal glance which his companions cast around them, and striking a light

with his pistol, desired them to set to work at kindling a fire, while he went out for some meat and vegetables to cook. Oates was not at all pleased with this arrangement, but as he was ashamed to confess his cowardice, the colonel took silence for consent, and went out. Mervyn heard him distinctly unbar and unlock a series of doors, but his departure was so abrupt that he scarcely saw in what direction he made his exit.

Left alone with the direful being who called himself his protector, Mervyn began to feel the full horror and uncertainty of his position. At the same time he felt powerless to extricate himself from it, and that his only resource for the present was submission. He spoke not a word to Oates, but busied himself in kindling the fire, and chopping the wood; but the doctor, dismayed at the deep silence of the deserted mansion, began questioning him as to his opinion on the events of the day. Mervyn eluded these inquiries as well as he could, but ultimately they must have produced replies by no means agreeable to the questioner, when fortunately Blood returned, announcing his approach by the same process of bolting and barring. He had a basket of beefsteaks, two or three loaves, bacon, eggs, and a large plaice, besides divers relishing matters to eat with them. As for drinkables, he stated that he had a barrel of as fine claret as was in the king's cellar, and some

brandy of the first quality, which he bought of a smuggler, one of his particular friends.

"I gave him shelter in my mansion," said the colonel, with considerable dignity, "at a time when he was hotly pursued by the myrmidons of justice, and he slung himself a hammock, which he left me by way of legacy when he went on his last cruise —last, indeed! for the poor devil was slung up at his own yardarm, by the injustice of an admiralty court. His room will be yours, Mervyn, and you will find his hammock very comfortable. Poor Joe Bluff!—he was as honest a fellow as ever was hanged—which is saying a bold word."

Blood now turned up his sleeves and began the operation of cookery, with the zeal and skill of an amateur, interspersing his doings with an account of his early campaigns under Cromwell, in which he said he acquired his dexterity in the culinary art. Nor did he praise himself without cause, for, considering that he lacked almost all the utensils of cookery, he executed his task admirably. The fish and steaks were broiled to a nicety on the embers, and though they had only one dish and two knives among them, the dinner was divided with great equity, and swallowed by appetites not disposed to be fastidious. Blood dived into some remote cellar for claret and brandy, and there was abundance of both, and of first-rate quality.

Mervyn was quickly overcome by the potency of these liquors, or it may be by some additional delicacy introduced by the colonel into his drink, and he grew so drowsy, that much as he disliked the idea of being alone in any part of the gloomy old mansion, he requested Blood to show him to his hammock. Accordingly that gentleman conducted him to the door, and pointing to the story above, told him to take the first apartment to his right.

Mervyn soon found the room indicated by his host, and entering at a door whose rusty hinges refused to close, he found himself in a chamber altogether destitute of furniture, except the boasted hammock swinging by a rope from a carved angle in the roof. On this was a straw mattress which smelt very musty, and an old sail by way of counterpane. Sleepy as he was, Mervyn was hesitating as to availing himself of the comforts thus placed at his disposal, when Blood entered with a lamp and a bundle of straw.

"You must learn to do at Rome as they do at Rome, and put up with a soldier's lot," he said, somewhat kindly, and spreading the straw on the hammock. "So don't make yourself wretched, child, and imagine you are friendless in the world; for I like you, and Thomas Blood never loved or hated but some one was the better or the worse for

it. Besides," he added, relapsing into his usual tone, "if you feel very dreary, you have always a rope at command."

And with this facetious observation, the colonel retired with his lamp, leaving Mervyn alone and in darkness, to revolve the agreeable wit contained in his parting remark!

CHAPTER III.

THE COUP D'ETAT.

On the day following the events above narrated, all London rang with the particulars of Oates's deposition, heightened of course and diversified according to the relator's humour. Oates appeared before the council, with a tale similar to that which he had made to Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, but with several additions of circumstances and persons. He stated that the Jesuits had long been suspicious of him, and intended to murder him, from the discoveries they made of his plans, had he not withdrawn himself from their power. He accused them of causing and fomenting the rebellion in Scotland, in order to distract the government; and in addition to his former accusation of Coleman, he accused that

person of being acquainted with the whole conspiracy, and an active worker in it.

The ferment excited was inconceivable to one who had looked merely on the tranquil surface of the nation, without fathoming the ground swell of opinion and passions which raged below, and was now suddenly brought into violent play.

Many Jesuits and their papers were seized, and a warrant issued against Coleman. The Earl of Danby hoped, by extreme zeal in this outburst of fanaticism, to outbid Shaftesbury and the popular party. Coleman had, however, a whole day to make his escape, probably not without connivance of the authorities. But, unhappily for himself, he thought it sufficient to baffle so unsupported an accusation by putting his papers out of the way, which he secretly did, but he forgot a drawer in his bureau containing a portion of his correspondence with La Chaise during the years '74, '75, and a part of '76. These included the foolish and treasonable correspondence of the secretary with the French court to obtain money, and a vast deal of matter concerning the hopes and plans of the catholic party, which in that plotting age were easily wrested into conspiracies against the religion and constitution of the state.

When Oates and his victim were confronted before the council, Oates actually did not know him, but when he heard his voice he made a lucky guess,

from other circumstances, who he was. Coleman accordingly was committed on a secretary's warrant.

The king, in whose presence Oates was examined, detected him in so many prevarications, that he declared he gave no credit to what he said. In particular he detected a remarkable flaw in one portion of Oates's evidence, which, had not the madness of the times roared down the voice of reason, must have overthrown his whole plot. He alleged that, when he was in Spain, he was carried before Don John, who promised assistance in men and money to the English Jesuits, with unbounded liberality. Charles quietly asked what sort of man Don John was, and Oates, from a general idea entertained in England of the Spaniards, replied that he was tall, thin, and olive-coloured. The king, however, happened to have seen Don John in Paris, and knew him to be short, fat, and very fair-complexioned. And from this brick he judged of the whole building.

But it was too late to stop the current of opinion, and unhappily the detested ministry of the day hoped to regain popularity by joining the hue and cry, which they were well aware might become an irresistible engine in the hands of the opposite faction. The king showed his opinion of the whole affair by leaving town the next day, his ostensible reason being to attend the races at Newmarket.

Coleman's letters, however, were now discovered,

and seemed to lend a fatal corroboration to all Oates's allegations. Although they in no particular confirmed his imaginary plots, the general outline was such as needed but the colourings of popular fanaticism and fear, to establish an identity. This correspondence proved, in words, what no one doubted—that for many years a design had been on foot to root out the great northern heresy. The letters were filled with cravings for money, and general insinuations of the necessity of armed assistance in the accomplishment of certain indefinite plans, which chimed in fatally with the general suspicions of the people.

But when the first rush of popular fury was over the English people, as they always do, began to use their reason. A rigid comparison of the contents of these letters with Oates's assertions was made, and found not to confirm them on any one point or particular, and when its news grew stale on the public ear, the plot would probably have languished and died away, had not a more vigorous breath infused new life into it.

The genius of the storm which was rising round the throne of Charles II.—that wild, restless, yet most politic spirit of Shaftesbury—perceiving with intuitive sagacity all the rich harvest of advantages which might be reaped from the whirlwind, would not suffer it to expire in a few ineffectual murmurs. Accordingly this cloud, though at first but of the bigness of a man's hand, gradually collecting its ter-

rors, and fraught with lightning and darkness, was about to burst in a storm which, with all the devastation and horrors which it inflicted, purified the atmosphere of opinion, and prepared it for the glorious sun of toleration.

Returning to our hero, he continued for some days a sort of prisoner in Colonel Blood's establishment. He was indeed allowed the free range of the vast old deserted mansion, a privilege of which, after a brief glance through a few of the lower chambers, and disturbing many broods of rats who had long held quiet possession, he cared not to avail himself. The mansion bore irrefragable tokens of the suspicious terrors of a miser's existence, and of the laborious efforts made by its last unhappy possessor to provide for that security without, which failed him from within. Almost all the windows on the land side were either blocked up, or so high, and secured by such massive bars of iron, that exit or inlet were equally impossible. Mervyn, however, by climbing up on the pillars of a room which, to judge from its dilapidated remains, had once been the library, and looking through the broken panes of a lattice, obtained some general idea that on the land side the mansion was surrounded by a large ruinous garden, ornamented according to the Elizabethan taste, with statues and fountains to imitate an Italian pleasaunce, but all broken and overgrown with weeds. The garden was flanked by lofty stone-walls,

spiked at the top, but so utterly gone to decay were its once splendid parterres and terraces, that but for a few tall flowers waving their melancholy beauty among the general desolation, one would have thought that it had never been any thing but a wilderness.

Imprisoned in this melancholy mansion, Mervyn past his time drearily enough; its utter solitude broken only at long intervals by visits from one or two ruffianly-looking personages, who came and went he knew not why nor whither. Blood artfully contrived to reconcile him to this extreme seclusion by representing that, owing to the ferment into which Oates's discovery had thrown the nation, the Jesuits were arrested everywhere, and severely maltreated, and that he, as a disciple of St. Omer, would run great risk. He even tried to frighten the youth by hinting that in the present state of the popular mind he ran some danger of being torn to pieces, if he were discovered, and gave an appalling description of the maltreatment of the five Jesuits already seized on Oates's evidence.

Nor was this dread without ample foundation. Shaftesbury and his party secretly took every measure to increase the vulgar fear and rage, till it rose to an ungovernable height, and the national mind rushed from a state of apathy into absolute madness. The fatal effects of Danby's policy were now evident.

But for him the plot might have been stifled in its birth, under the king's contempt and the nation's indifference; but that great hallucination of a statesman else remarkable for his sagacity in steering clear of storms—the persuasion that it was possible to retrieve his popularity by joining the rush against France and popery—led him on to his own ruin and that of the cause which he sought to serve.

During those long and solitary hours which Mervyn was now condemned to pass, many gloomy reflections came to him, touching the events of his life, his disgraceful birth, his unfortunate escape from St. Omer, and the accidents which had befallen him since his arrival in England; and all these puzzled and grieved him alternately. It seemed, indeed, as if he were led along by some irresistible fate, to an end which he could not divine, but which was certain, inevitable, not to be questioned, but obeyed. His imagination was haunted, too, by a bewildering idea of some connexion between his fate and that illustrious name of Aumerle, which had met him at every step. This idea was strengthened by accidentally stumbling, in one of his rummages in the rat-haunted library, on a genealogy of the Aumerle family, shrined in the pages of Gascoigne's "Mirror of Honour." By this he learned that the second title of that most ancient and wealthy house was Mervyn;

and though Oates had hit upon a happy reason for this curious coincidence, it did not satisfy our dreaming hero. Yet what relations could exist between the son of a French robber, executed at St. Omer, and the high baronial house whose deeds and renown were part of the history of England herself—ancient, all-glorious England ?

He had questioned Blood, in a very round-about and ingenious manner, as he thought at the time, concerning this great house of Aumerle; and he learned, with some emotion, that it had been extinct for many years, the last earl—he who had committed suicide in the Tower—having died without issue. He was very importunate also to learn from Blood his father's name, as he professed to know it; but the colonel assured him that, for certain reasons, it was necessary to defer the communication; and this imposed another strong restraint on Mervyn's impatience.

Meanwhile the colonel treated him with great kindness; with much more indeed than could have been expected from his rugged nature. He took delight in teaching him the use of the sword, of which he himself was a perfect master, and such points as might be useful to him in his destined profession, which, according to him, was to be that of a soldier. He told long but amusing stories of his own campaigns, and of Cromwell's battles, in almost all of which he had been engaged; and never

failed, on returning from excursions, to bring in budgets of news and anecdotes afloat concerning the plot.

Whether by design or not, these revelations constantly afforded glimpses of Oates's real character and motives, which amazed the innocent scholar of St. Omer. Blood seemed to enjoy his wonder and horror, probably contrasting his own seared and unquailing conscience with the freshness and spotless simplicity of the youth's, and smiling at his ignorance of the vicious theatre on which he was destined to play a part.

One day the colonel ventured out in broad daylight, though in a very elaborate disguise, and, returning about sunset, found Mervyn engaged in a melancholy revery over an old missal, which he had brought with him from St. Omer. Blood was evidently in high spirits, and remarking, with a smile, that they were going to have company, told Mervyn to help him in preparing the apartment for the reception of visiters. The youth mechanically obeyed, and was soon persuaded, from the pains which Blood took, that the visiters must be of some distinction, and by no means such as had recently honoured them with calls. Blood swept the hearth, made a bright fire, brought two or three trusses of straw to serve instead of chairs, and lighted some torches, which he placed at intervals about the room.

Having arranged these things, he sat himself

down with a hearty curse, and a half comic, half wondering exclamation at the turn of fortune which had made a housemaid of one of Cromwell's Ironsides. After this, he changed the strain to impatient exclamations at the delay of his friends, and at last, wrapping himself in his cloak, he went down the staircase leading to the corridor, by which he usually made his exit, and which he never suffered Mervyn to penetrate, intending, as he said, to look out for these visiters. Half an hour elapsed before he returned, and then it was in company with a man who, however wrapped up and disguised, Mervyn instantly recognised as his venerable friend, Dr. Oates.

"And how doth Joas like the sarvice of the temple?" said Oates, greeting the youth with a crafty smile.

"He prefers any to the devil's!" replied Mervyn, with a complimentary glance at the doctor.

"Let queenly Athalia then beware, for Joaida will doubtless find it some day in his interest to betray her," said Oates, with another of his unsightly grins at Blood.

"When that day comes, thou prophet in Israel!" replied the colonel, "thy neck will be as near the hangman's rope as ever to thy canonical cravat!"

"Why, man, I have ate, drank, and slept these twenty years with that rope round my neck; but

never yet saw I the Death's valet to tighten it," replied Oates; "and I trust I never shall; for methinks I am now within sight of a rich harbour, where I may lay up my sea-worn timbers, and go to pieces at leisure, in a quiet, honest way. And let me tell you, Blood," he added, in a particularly gloomy tone, "were it for nothing but for the toil of mind and restless fears of this kind of life, 'tis good to be virtuous. Yet for all that, brother Mervyn, methinks I shall make as good a Protestant Saint as ever was catalogued in your Popish martyrology."

"The fiend, for aught I know, might make the same," said Mervyn, his eyes flashing with tears of rage. "But I tell thee, Oates—I tell thee, devil! as surely as thou hast betrayed the holy faith thou mockest, with a Judas-kiss, so surely shall thy perjuries be made manifest, even on earth, and thy name become the synonym of detected crime!"

"Wilt *thou* bring on this scarecrow sequel, my young mouse in a trap?" said Oates, jeeringly.

"I will peril life and health, soul and body, Heaven assisting, in that good work!" replied Mervyn.

"Why then we must spike you in the trap, instead of tying you by the tail, and playing with you awhile ere we bestow you on the cat, little brother Mervyn," returned Oates.

"You forget, friend Titus," said the colonel, significantly. "'Tis true, the cheese was yours, but the

trap is mine, and I have taken a liking to my little mousey—and I should like to see the man that dare but look unkindly on the thing I love."

"Nay, I like little Ismael well enough myself," said Oates, changing his tone very suddenly, "and of that I shall give proof some of these fine mornings."

"I had rather a serpent crushed me in his folds," replied Mervyn, and seizing his missal he seated himself in a perturbed silence on the hearth.

"Well, well, Blood, talk as thou wilt," said Oates, after a moment's pause, "but 'slife, I had rather thou hadst the breaking of this wild young steed than I. Methinks I can easier guide the course of that mad elephant, popular opinion."

"Look that it tear thee not to pieces in thy turn," replied the colonel. "The good steed doth but rear and play, but throws not his experienced rider. Hark!—Paul's tolling twelve—these gallants should be here!"

There was another brief pause, during which the crackling of the blazing wood was alone audible; then came a splash of oars, and a shrill whistle without. Blood started up, seized a torch, and left the apartment. Mervyn continued to read, without even looking at Oates, whose dull malignant eyes were, however, fixed on him.

The sound of footsteps ascending the stairs was soon audible, and several voices in eager conversa-

tion, some of which Mervyn thought he had heard before. The door opened, and Blood appeared, lighting in four cavaliers in long roquelaures and slouched hats, the two foremost of whom he recognised as Shaftesbury and the Lord Howard. The third was a tall, stately-looking gentleman, but with a countenance singularly proud and morose The last cavalier, a young and very handsome man, dressed with elaborate richness, as appeared when he laid aside his cloak, had a cheerful winning countenance, though characterized by the reckless profligacy remarkable in almost all the portraits of Charles II.'s courtiers. This cavalier was in fact, the brave and beautiful "Absolom" of Dryden's satire, he who

> Whate'er he did was done with so much ease
> In him alone 'twas natural to please:
> His motions all accompany'd with grace;
> And Paradise was opened in his face.

"You see, my lord duke, men stand no more on precedence in plots than in battles," said Shaftesbury, bowing to Monmouth as he entered first.

"Nay, I will dispute no man's right to be hanged or shot before me," replied the duke, smiling, "and least of all yours, my Lord Shaftesbury."

"'Tis for his majesty to regulate all such honours," said the Lord Howard, glancing sharply round. "Ha, what!—Mr. Oates's *protégé* again?"

"And Colonel Blood's, my lord," said that gen-

tleman, with a slight smile; "and I hope, when the Monmouth and Shaftesbury administration commences its glorious career, the *protégé* of all your lordships."

"Tut, colonel, I am no administrator! I want only the sword of the state in my hand!" replied the duke. "Give me that—soldiers not clerks—and let who will wield the pen."

"Your grace chooses more bravely than wisely," said Shaftesbury. "The days are past or passing when force held the sway, and a time is coming when a gray goose-quill shall be more powerful in good or evil than the sword of Alexander."

"Meanwhile let us keep ours sharp," said Monmouth, smiling sarcastically. "Trust in the Lord, brothers! as Cromwell said to his Ironsides, but keep your powder dry."

"At all events, my lords, you are all very heartily welcome to my poor roof," said Blood. "Beseech you all, take a rude soldier's greeting, and be seated. But I thought, my Lord Shaftesbury, that Colonel Sydney and Lord Russell were to be of the consult?"

"Thou art still a novice in men's affairs then, sir," replied the earl. "These are not the men for such a business as we come about. Russell is too honest, and Sydney is too inflexibly just, to adapt themselves to the tortuous policy the age demands. To work well, such men must believe in their cause,

and suspect no shadow of wrong in its brightness. Well, Mr. Oates," continued he, turning to that personage, "since we last met, you are grown a great man. Prithee, is your doublet too narrow for you yet?"

"I hope, my lord," said the duke, "that though our friend be of a sudden and a monstrous growth, he will not prove a marsh-mushroom, and shrivel into nought as soon."

"Whatso foot crushes me, I will make his path slippery, my loard," said Oates, emphatically.

"*Our* ground is slippery enough already—we slide on watery ice," said the third cavalier, in a gloomy voice. "Mr. Oates, whether this popish plot be true or not, rests with your conscience; I pretend not to burden mine with the knowledge; but it is my solemn duty, believing in its existence as I religiously do—"

"And I," interrupted Howard, with a peculiar grimace. "And I, my Lord Essex—but take it in any light you will, 'tis the most marvellous contrivance to oust our enemies that hath been hit upon since the days of Machiavelli."

"And yet the good Danby thinks to ride our storm as if he were the Magus raising it!" said Shaftesbury, tartly. "Poor courtly gentleman! as if a lord high treasurer could ever become a tribune of the people."

"But methinks the whole discovery is but a

sickly bantling, that will ne'er see manhood," said Essex.

"It needs crutches, Essex, only crutches," replied the earl. "We must strike some *grand coup*—such as Richelieu would have struck, not Sydney's Marcus Brutus! I will confess, Master Oates, I did anticipate little or nothing from the first divulgement of your great plot; but it takes marvellously, and if we can but preserve its life till the parliament meets, I will engage to make an engine of it that shall thrust these ministers from their seats for ever."

"And my blessed uncle of York!" exclaimed Monmouth. "I care not to play the babe in the wood, to be mossed over by all the robin-redbreasts of action in the world."

"You cannot love his highness less than I do," replied the earl, with a malignant smile. "But you are too hasty, Monmouth—sudden and rash, not politic and slow, as hath been the way with those who would mount by pulling down. Some day you will run yourself within the meaning of the statute of Edward III., from whose meshes my utmost skill can hardly keep myself disentangled."

"Then I will rush into it sword in hand, and so cut the cords!" said Monmouth.

"Do not eat your fruit in blossom, my master," said Shaftesbury, calmly. "The day may come

when it will be fitting to storm the citadel; at present we are merely throwing down its defences."

"Why, faith, I am weary too of this hesitating policy," exclaimed Howard. "I am of Prince Rupert's opinion—to fight first and reason afterwards."

"He was of that opinion at Marston Moor," said Shaftesbury. "And yet I doubt if matters came to a full push, my lord——"

"You doubt what, Shaftesbury?" interrupted Howard, colouring deeply. "What mean you by that pause?"

"Nothing, Lord Howard," replied the earl, very quietly, "nothing—but that no good husbandman scythes his corn while it is green. And methinks that you, who have the fairest wife and richest estate in England, should play more cautiously in such a desperate game than we poor melancholy bachelors."

"The lady is fair, but then—she *is* my wife," said Howard, carelessly. "And as to the estate, faith, we have shackled it cursedly during her life, and after that it is entailed to a remote rascal of the Aumerles."

"I have a wife whom I dearly love, and children whose rights I would not peril for the apple of mine eye," said the Earl of Essex, "forasmuch as 'tis better to be a dog of a curious breed in Eng-

land than a poor man: but I will wager all—life, children, wife, property—sooner than submit to arbitrary power and popish tyranny."

"And I," said Monmouth, "have a sweet mistress whom I love better than ye all do your wives, but she as well as I will throw life and love on the rich die of a crown, though fate hold the stakes against us."

"Let not Sydney hear you talk of a crown, Monmouth," said Shaftesbury, gravely. "I have heard him swear he cares not, if there must be a tyrant, whether James of York or James of Monmouth be he. Sydney is for a free and glorious Republic, caring not whether himself be the first or last of its citizens, so that the gradations be allotted by merit—as indeed he need not, for that would place him foremost."

"Well—let him bring back the old Republic, and then they will need a Cromwell," said Monmouth, laughing. "But methinks, colonel, the air of this chamber is too damp for any thing but a frog. Have you a cellar here?"

"It were argument of great ignorance of the court to invite the Duke of Monmouth without some such provision," said Blood. "Ichabod, go draw us a tankard from the black cask to the right as you enter, chalked, Lachrymæ C.

"Prithee, plain Canaries for me, an it suit your

cellar-bill, mine host," said the duke; "I'll drink none of your Italian popish wines, lest Oates here indict me. And is this your Ganymede, old Thunderer? A comely youth, good sooth."

"Yes, and fit for a better service, which your grace may some day afford him," replied Blood.

"Faith, yes, an he can wield a sword," said Monmouth. "Thy fortune is made, child, if thou art as well fitted for the fields of Mars as those of Venus. Can he draw blue steel, Blood?"

"In a good cause, my lord duke, to the death," replied Mervyn, boldly.

"My lord duke!" repeated Shaftesbury, "How knows he that?—Is he safe, Blood, that you trust him so far?"

"I will answer for his honour with my life," said Blood.

Mervyn, darting a resentful glance at Shaftesbury, made his exit with the tankard.

The cellar was at some distance; and it was several minutes ere he returned with the wine. His re-entry was scarcely noticed by any one but Blood, who motioned him to put the wine down, for Shaftesbury was speaking with peculiar earnestness, and in a low tone.

"The plot is staggering," he was saying; "it cannot survive unless some new blood be poured into its exhausted arteries. You know well, Oates,

that the king's incredulity, and the non-appearance of those murderers of yours, gave it a heavy blow. I scruple not to allow that I was about to give thee and the plot up, friend, when the thrice-fortunate discovery of Coleman's letters occurred; but rest assured they will only condemn him, not justify you. People are already coming back to their senses, and your credit stands a chance of waning away in a slow consumption, and its owner of ending at Tyburn, like poor Mocedo."

"But, my loard, that cannot be," said Oates, tremulously. "The nation has clearly taken part with me in the discovery of the ploat, and Coleman's letters, though doubtless confirming me in no particular, do in all the general matter most amply and substantially confirm my tidings out of Gath."

"At all hazards," said Howard, "it will not do to let the plot fall. 'Tis a mine that will burst on the engineer, or like an overcharged cannon, wreak its fury on those who loaded it; and we shall but have raised the popular fury to gorge itself in our own destruction."

"And if I fall, it shall not be alone, nobles of Israel," said Oates, gloomily. "And I will make but sorrowful sport for the Philistines."

"And what can such a poor forlorn wretch as thou art do, with a parcel of trumpery inventions?"

said the earl, with ineffable contempt. "'Tis but to let you sink by the weight of your own lies to the bottomless pit of ignominy."

"Nay now, but what I mean, my loard," said Oates, in an abject tone of submission, "is but this, that though I am willing to save the nation by any path your lordships can point out, I feel not within me the courage necessary to win a leaf in Fox's Book of Martyrs, when Dr. Tongue brings out his new edition."

"It were indeed too much to burn thee out of one fire into another," replied the earl.

"And hark ye, man, we do not mean to abandon you," said Monmouth; "so look a little less like a condemned ghost, for know we are all embarked in the same boat, and will sink or swim together."

"My Lord Monmouth, you are good at the oar, but pray you meddle not with the helm," said Shaftesbury, very sharply.

"And men say, Shaftesbury, you are fond of navigating stormy waters, and showing your dexterity by coasting amidst shallows and breakers when the open sea would better serve," replied the duke.

"'Sdeath, my lords," exclaimed Blood, impatiently, "methought it was allowed at all hands that the doctor's credit is to be supported by hook or by crook, at all risks."

"The colonel is right; policy forbid we should desert so good a cause!" exclaimed Shaftesbury, after a deep pause of rumination. "Be of good cheer, brother Oates. *Costa che costa*, we must support you, and will. The existence of the plot must be supported by some fine stroke—something to fix suspicion on the Duke of York—such as the ill-treatment of some popular magistrate mixed up in the affair!—what if assaulted by Catholic ruffians *masked and disguised?*"

"Would you slit some worshipful nose, as the court—or rather the colonel here—served poor Coventry," said Howard, laughing.

"If it be aught that needs a strong arm, I have one at the devotion of the cause," said the colonel.

"Well, 'tis no treason to drink to the success of all honest designs," said Monmouth. "Where is the sack?—Ha, Ganymede! The boy is surely warming his blood at thy expense, colonel; but indeed it must be nigh frozen."

"He is here, my lord," said the colonel, turning to his young cup-bearer, who was standing motionless with surprise at these revelations.

"'Slids, Blood, I like not two witnesses to what a crown-lawyer may construe into a variety of queer shapes," said Shaftesbury, hastily. "And methinks 'tis late for such a mere boy to be from the pillow; send him thither, colonel."

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Blood reiterated this command, though in a very mild tone, and Mervyn withdrew in proud silence. Blood, however, recalled him to receive a goblet of wine and a torch, for he was going without either, and, bowing respectfully to the company, he retired.

CHAPTER IV.

WANDERINGS IN AN OLD MANSION.

With a sad and hesitating step Mervyn left the apartment; and as the door closed, and he found himself alone in the ruinous corridor, the full desolation of his position rushed overpoweringly upon him. He proceeded however, mechanically, up the silent staircase, to his own miserable chamber, and there placing his lamp on the floor, he sat down beside it in utter despair. He thought of that sweet and innocent peace of his young days at St. Omer, under the severe but benevolent eye of Van Huysman, and drew a melancholy contrast between his present wretched condition and the golden reveries of ignorance which had lured him forth on the troubled waves of the world. Unacquainted as he was with the passions and politics of the times,

Mervyn still had ample materials for fearful conjecture, concerning the projects of the extraordinary society assembled with so much mystery, in such a place. Rigidly educated as he had been in submission and filial love to the church, in whose bosom he had been reared, his conscience was fretted and stung by the certainty which he now possessed, that he was in the power of men plotting against her very existence. As he meditated long and deeply on this circumstance, recollections of the solemn benediction by which Oliva had dedicated him, came in full force upon upon him, and his present condition, in the service of the church's bitter enemies, assumed the hideous aspect of a crime against Heaven itself.

While these ideas thronged upon him, he began to meditate the propriety of escaping from what he almost considered as shackles of the Evil One. The prospect of throwing himself alone and friendless on the world had no longer such terrors to him, for he felt an energy and resolution which his excited fancy represented as promptings of some good angel. The time too seemed propitious; his captors were absorbed in their own dark projects, and he need fear no espial on the part of Blood, who generally watched his movements with anxiety. But then was escape possible? Mervyn sat ruminating for some time, and at last, with a vague hope that he might find some outlet which had yet eluded his

researches, he rose, took his torch, and left the apartment.

He listened for a moment with one foot in the corridor, throwing his light far and searchingly around, above and below. But all was silent as the grave; the thin rays of moonlight, piercing among the dusty beams of the roof, crossed each other in fantastic forms, and illuminating the hall below, threw into it shadowy and indistinct masses, which at the first glance seemed like an assembly of dark spirits watching his motions. A moment's observation served to dissipate this illusion, and he proceeded cautiously on his survey. Room after room did he open of those communicating with the corridor, and found in all the same darkness and the same disappointment. Bare walls mouldering with damp, rotten floors that yielded an insecure footing as he crossed them, high and narrow windows blocked with triple bars, and some few decayed relics of former habitation, probably not deemed worth removing, were all the discoveries he made.

Vexed and chilled with the result of his gloomy survey, he returned into the corridor, and stood for some minutes leaning wistfully over the balustrade. While thus engaged his eye fell by chance on the staircase below, which, touched with white beams of moonlight, seemed of carved stone, and reminded him of a flight of steps which he had observed in his last visit to the cellar, and which he remembered

had excited his curiosity as to whither they might lead. The idea occurred instantly, that perhaps, in this jealously constructed mansion, those stairs might lead to some outlet not known, and therefore not secured, by Blood. At all events he determined on exploring them, for if they led to disappointment it was but one added to many.

Accordingly he descended the old crumbling staircase, taking great pains to prevent any creaking which might betray him, and reached the hall, where he paused and looked round him. Hearing and perceiving nought, he trod along with a bolder step, and opening a door imperfectly concealed by its resemblance to the panels of the walls, he entered a wide kitchen, which seemed capacious enough to have cooked a dinner for an army. But even the tiled floor was overgrown with grass, and frogs hopped about on the very hearths; indeed, there were many tokens of a visit from the river, on a level with which were the kitchen windows. A pantry communicated with this apartment, in which was a trap-door leading to the cellars. Down this Mervyn boldly proceeded, and a few steps brought him to the floor of the cellar, which was of large extent, and suited the general proportions of the mansion. The walls were dripping with damp white moss, and the air was so dense that Mervyn's torch seemed as if burning in a mist. On the opposite side of the cellar, over a range of arches, was the flight of steps

which he had remarked. It was very narrow, and unrailed, as if formed merely by the jutting out of massive stones at intervals from the walls, and throwing his torchlight upwards, Mervyn saw that it terminated in a black archway above the cellar.

The young adventurer hesitated not a moment to continue his exploration; and though the stones were covered with slippery incrustations, and some of them trembled as he trod, he boldly proceeded. Some fifteen of these steps brought him to a level with the archway, which, as a glance informed him, terminated in a very narrow doorway. The door, however, was evidently of massive materials, though it yielded easily to his pressure, and swung heavily back on its hinges.

Mervyn was on the point of stepping forward without reflection, when luckily he perceived, but with a deadly sensation of horror, that he was about to tread into a deep square well, of a depth beyond the power of his torch to illumine. Further observation showed him, on the opposite side, a doorway corresponding to that at which he stood, and a massive door of oak, clenched with iron, leaning off the hinges against it. There were also remains of a drawbridge, the chains still hanging rustily on the door-timbers, and some broken pieces of iron-work adhering to the threshold.

This obstacle seemed, at first sight, insurmountable, and Mervyn also recollected, with a chill of

horror, certain particulars of the old miser's murder, which he had not noticed much when he heard them, but which now struck his memory painfully. He remembered to have heard that the parricide and his accomplices effected an entry into the old man's apartment by laying a beam of wood across the well in which he usually kept his treasures, in an iron cask, and, after completing the terrible deed, had dropped his corpse into the well, to give him an appearance of having met his death by accident. This dreadful association almost unnerved the young explorer, and the torch quivered in his hand, as if in an ague-fit; but he rallied his courage by a strong effort, and began examining the well with minute attention.

Mervyn had little doubt that the door on the opposite side opened into the unhappy miser's bedchamber, and still less that it must have some exit contrived for his security—at least some communication with one. He determined, therefore, at all hazards, to attempt exploring it. But, at first, this seemed impossible; for there were, apparently, no means to cross the frightful chasm yawning between. On consideration, however, he imagined it would be no difficult task to leap it, if he had any means of staying himself on the opposite threshold after the shock. Looking upward, a dangling rope caught his eye, and reflecting that it must needs be of great strength, and well fixed, to bear the weight

of gold which the rich miser had daily lowered into the well, he caught hold of it, and examined it carefully. Though somewhat worn and blackened by time, he still thought the rope strong enough to bear his light weight, even if obliged to trust to it wholly; and he confided much in the skill and activity which had always enabled him to bear the bell among the students at St. Omer. He began to fear, however, that he should be obliged to abandon his torch, which was no very pleasant alternative on such an adventure; but again, on deliberate thought, he imagined that he could keep it in his left hand, while with his right he grasped the rope. This idea he paused not to weigh in very nice scales, fearing lest his resolution might fail, and winding the rope round his hand and arm, he leaped.

The events of the next two moments, for it occupied but a brief flash of time, ever afterwards appeared to him like the recollection of some insane dream. He remembered that his foot slipped on the very edge of the threshold—that he was thrown back, and in a moment hung struggling over the abyss, with a dreadful pain in his shoulder and arm, as if his weight were dragging them off. And then he seemed to grasp at the rope with his left hand, still tenaciously keeping the torch, and with a sensation to which no language can do the faintest justice, he saw the flame mingle with the rope—fire it! The rest was a mere effort of instinct, for mind

was lost in intense horror. But he found himself, he knew not how, standing secure on the stonework of the doorway, still grasping the torch and a piece of the rope, the remainder burning above him till it came to the iron roller, where it became extinguished.

Mervyn's first use of speech and reason was to utter a fervent Laus! which came spontaneously to the lips of the young acolyte of St. Omer. He then endeavoured to move the broken door sideways, but its prodigious weight made that impossible for his strength; and certain that he could not return the way he had come, he was obliged to apply his efforts to pushing it forward. In this he succeeded, and the massive portal fell with a thundering bang on the floor of the apartment, seeming to ring in echoes through the whole mansion. At the same time a thick cloud of dust rose, and almost stifled the young adventurer, and he heard a sudden sound of scrambling in the chamber, which made his heart palpitate violently. A moment's reflection convinced him that this clatter was caused by rats, and he plainly distinguished three or four crossing the floor in the wildest haste, and squeaking as if in the claws of a cat.

Mervyn was not without apprehensions that the noise of the falling door might have reached Blood and his fellow-conspirators, and he listened for some minutes in a state of very great perturbation. The

deep uninterrupted silence which succeeded, reassured while it appalled him, and he ventured to cast a cursory glance round the chamber, his cheek whitening as he perceived the justice of his conclusion, that it had been the unfortunate miser's.

He found himself in a large,irregularly-formed apartment, which still bore many tokens of the use to which it had been applied by its former tenant. There was a huge old mahogany bedstead still remaining, very elaborately carved with Gothic cupids and festoons of vines and grapes, but all covered with dust and cobwebs. The bed, the pillows, the rich old counterpane of raised damask, were still there, all rat-eaten, black, and mouldy with neglect; and Mervyn's hair almost bristled on his head when he thought that these things were probably left just as they were found on the morning of the murder.

The walls were covered with tapestry, but the designs were too thickly laden with dust to be distinguished, and Mervyn saw that the cornices had once been gilded, but probably half a century before even the miser's era. There was very little furniture beside, but it was massive, and of a very dark rich oak, finely carved. The keenest scrutiny could not, however, discern the main object of his search—an exit. There were indeed two iron-barred lattices, which he perceived by as many streams of wan moonlight; but on approaching and examining the

wall with more attention he perceived a door between these lights, strongly barred with rusty bolts.

Somewhat disheartened by this formidable obstacle, still the recollection of the position in which he had placed himself, compelled him to persevere. He set his torch down, by treading a small hole for it in the rotten floor, and applied himself with all his strength to unfasten the bolts. The rust, combined with their heaviness, made his efforts for some time almost without effect; but at last he succeeded with one, and encouraged by this glimpse of good-luck, renewed his toils with a zeal and patience which were ultimately rewarded, by the yielding of what he believed to be the final bar between him and liberty. He set his knee against the door, and made so violent a push that it opened suddenly, and pitched him forward, so that he fell over his torch and extinguished it. He sprang up again instantly, and found himself, with what surprise and disappointment may be guessed, in the balcony which he had noticed on his first arrival, overhanging the river at a great height.

The moon shone with tranquil lustre from a sky of dark and cloudless blue, and vexed and alarmed as he was at his position, Mervyn was soothed with the beauty and effulgence of the scene before him. But as he gazed on the dark waters beneath, the distant lights twinkling down the shores, and the

hopeless isolation of his position, he felt convinced of the impossibility of escape, and his next thought was how to return unobserved to his own apartment. But then the recollection of the dangers he had encountered to reach this point, and the utter impossibility of venturing back the same way occurred to him. All the tales he had ever heard or read, of men who unwittingly ventured as he had done, into places whence they could find no exit, and so perished miserably of starvation and horror, crowded in dismal procession through his imagination. The terror of this idea extinguished the superstitious dread which had seized him, and he stepped resolutely back into the miser's chamber.

All was perfectly still, but the moonbeams, stealing in at the open door, threw the old dusty furniture into fantastic groups, with ghastly reliefs of lights, which a terrified imagination might easily conjure into spectres. But Mervyn felt that his very life depended on his coolness and self-possession. A moment's reflection had now convinced him that there must be some other approach to the miser's apartment than over the well in which he kept his gold. He concluded that in his former cursory glance he had not noticed it in the dusty tapestry, and he thought by feeling all round he should light on the door, if any existed. He began, therefore, and searched the wall round, with an eagerness which seemed to refine his sense of touch to an

almost painful delicacy; but could find no trace of an exit. He raised his eyes, casting a despairing glance round the chamber, and at the moment thought he observed the dark hangings of the bed moving gently to and fro. This he accounted for, after a pause of indescribable terror, by supposing them to be ruffled by the breeze from the river; but as the motion increased, the thought flashed into his mind that the phenomenon was occasioned by a *thorough draught*, as no other portion of the damask was disturbed. He resolved then to search the wall on the opposite side of the couch, and presently started to find himself standing in a beam of moonlight, which streamed from a hole in a corner of the ceiling. This hole seemed just wide enough to admit the body of a slender man, and Mervyn perceived the relics of a trap-door lying at a triangle over it. A sort of perpendicular ladder was formed in the wall, of narrow juttings of wood, similar to those used in stables to climb lofts; and Mervyn clambered up recklessly, as one in a dream, and forcing his way through the hole, found himself on another floor.

It was some moments before the confusion of his ideas, and the deep darkness around, allowed him to form any notion as to where he had landed. He then conjectured, by some scanty beams of light struggling through apertures in the roof, that he was in some large garret or loft. He now felt certain to find an exit, most likely into the upper cor-

ridor, and resumed his operation of groping. He had hardly commenced, however, ere he heard a low murmuring sound of men's voices, engaged in a muttered conversation. The sound evidently came from below, and he concluded that he was near the conspirators whom he had left in discussion. He observed at the same time two or three darts of thin light in the floor, and on examination he saw that some of the boards were rat-gnawed into holes, which extended through the ceiling of the room below. Applying his eye to one of them, Mervyn perceived with considerable surprise that he was directly above the apartment in which he had left the conspirators, and that they were all below, seated round the wooden table, engaged in close and eager conversation. Shaftesbury was speaking, in his low deep tones, and Mervyn caught nothing of what was said but a continuous murmur, until the Lord Howard spoke in a raised and angry voice.

"Not so, my Lord Shaftesbury!" he said, vehemently. "I yield to no man in admiration of all the dull commonplace maxims of morality—they are so useful to deceive the mob—but methinks if, as I have oft heard you say, the end sanctifies the means, and, as I know myself, success justifies all —I see not that the preservation of this great nation is not well worth the sacrifice of one poor old mumbling puritan."

"I will have no concern in such bloody handlings, Howard," replied the earl, sternly. "I care not to be hanged in a silk rope, which they tell me is the proud distinction of our rank. But for any small matter which should stop short of such Newgate ruminations—suppose, for example, that *the Papists* inveigled him into some lone desert trap, like this old mansion of yours, Blood, which I marvel the devil still props above your head!—that masks (jolly fellows whom the colonel could easily levy among his Tyburn resolutes) seized, bound, and gagged him—perchance conveyed him to some place where 'tis known the duke's power extends, as if to have him there murdered.—And then by some anonymous betrayal, his life may be saved, —and the popular fury be lashed into as wild a madness as if the quaint old gentleman were hacked into mincemeat for the pope's supper."

"Verily, and on my salvation, I think I know the way to work your lordship's counsel," said Oates, eagerly. "I know one who hath the custody of some chambers belonging to some of the Duke of York's paupistical knaves in Somerset House, whither our goats of the atonement might easily be conveyed."

"And, faith, I know no man of the whole batch that could be easier trapped!" said Howard. "He goes out alone, at all hours, in blind lanes and alleys, on the scent of thieves and beggars (on both

which scores he is thine enemy, Blood). Indeed he hath of late conceived a notable project which should make some of us Jew-ridden lords tremble; for he runs on a monomania of taking up all mendicants and vagrant poor, to force them forsooth to work!"

"'Twas not without an eye at these peculiarities that I selected him from among so many worshipful of the faction, for the Doctor's *début*," said Shaftesbury; "though I warrant me there were hundreds—Sheriff Bethel and my Lord Mayor, for example—who would have made better handselling of it."

"And did not your loardship note his word, about being the first martyr?" said Oates, in his crawling tones, which made Mervyn feel sick at heart with loathing.

"But are you sure of your little cock in the loft?—Is he sound at roost?" said the earl, uneasily looking at the door. "Where is he?—I would not he were playing us the eavesdropper, for as Dr. Tongue justly observed on a late occasion—'tis too strong meat for babes."

"Nay, he is fast asleep by this time, I'll warrant him," said the colonel, taking a lamp. "But, however, I will go and see, for I love to have two nails always in one hook."

Mervyn sprang up on this intimation, and in-

stantly perceived, by the gleam of Blood's torch, who was now in the corridor below, that there was a door to his left. To open it, leap over some old tubs piled on the landing-place, trip down the corridor, and throw himself panting and breathless on his hammock, was but a moment's work. The next, and Blood peered in at the door, throwing his lamp over head, and glaring with his large wolfish eyes towards the youth, who kept himself perfectly still. Luckily the colonel contented himself with the assurance that his captive was safe, without subjecting him to any close inspection, and retired on tiptoe, leaving Mervyn in a state of anxiety, which effectually precluded all hope of changing his assumed into a real slumber.

CHAPTER V.

THE CONSPIRACY.

MERVYN spent nearly an hour after his vain researches, ruminating on what he had seen and heard, but unable to detect any clue to the tortuous labyrinth in which he was involved. The only clear conclusion he deduced, was that some insidious treachery was meditated by the faction in which he found himself involved, but against whom or by what means he could not divine. Only he understood in general that it was to support Oates's villanous assertions. He was too thoroughly unacquainted with mankind, and the reckless politics of the age, to imagine the real drift of Shaftesbury; and he thought it impossible that a nobleman of his high rank, once the

second magistrate of the kingdom, could really instigate so daring a breach of the laws.

Unable at last to bear the suspense into which these cogitations threw him, he resolved on returning to his hole in the garret, and ascertaining if possible some exacter meaning to the discourse he had overheard. On returning thither, however, he found that all the company were gone excepting Oates, who was sitting over the fire, engaged in a murmuring conversation with Blood, but in so low a tone, that he could make out nothing distinctly. The two worthies were solacing themselves with some burned wine, which Blood had on the fire in a pipkin.

Finding it impossible to make out what they were discussing, and fearful of being discovered, Mervyn at length returned to his hammock, and endeavoured to compose himself from the nervous excitement into which he was thrown. It was long, however, before he could accomplish this; and he only succeeded at last, in some degree, by forming a resolution that on the first opportunity he would question Blood himself, as to the meaning of what he had overheard; and if his replies were not satisfactory, he vowed to venture all—life itself—rather than remain in his power. With this determination, he dropped into a perturbed and dream-haunted slumber, from which he did

not awake till a late hour the following morning.

With the morning, however, returned his habitual dread of the man he was to take to task, but he persevered in his resolve, though with somewhat diminished courage. He descended with a flushed countenance and feverish pulse, but found, not without a sense of relief, that Blood was not there. The house was completely desolate; the staircase by which the colonel made his exits, barred and bolted; and, according to custom, he had provided the youth's breakfast, and some cold game pie for his dinner—leaving the key of the cellar significantly beside it.

Hours passed in this melancholy solitude; night came, and with it darker and sadder fantasies, readily prompted by his forlorn situation, and recollections of the scenes of the previous night. But every thought was at length lost in impatience and indignation at Blood's prolonged absence, for it was midnight before he heard the doors unlocking, and the colonel's step on the stairs.

Another disappointment awaited him. Blood was accompanied by the two watermen whose ruffianly appearance, while rowing them thither, Mervyn had previously noticed. Late as it was, these gentlemen were invited to sup with their conductor. But he was determined to have his explanation, and for that purpose sat out the whole of the

banquet, somewhat to the dissatisfaction of Blood, as he evinced by frowns, and various hints on the harm he did his health by sitting up so late. Mervyn, indeed, took no pains to conceal his discontent, and the colonel, afraid lest his companions should notice it, suffered them to withdraw on the first intimation of their wish to that effect.

During his absence, while escorting his guests to the exit, wherever that might be in this enchanted mansion, Mervyn endeavoured to rouse his courage, and succeeded in putting on an appearance of calm when the colonel moodily re-entered, with the keys jingling as usual at his belt. He resumed his seat, with a stern but somewhat anxious glance at the youth, and deliberately stirring the fire with a flaming piece of wood, inquired what the fiend he meant by staring at him with those large melancholy eyes of his, which he declared were enough to make a cat drown herself in a fit of despondency.

"I mean, Mr. Blood," said Mervyn, passionately, "I mean that I am weary of being imprisoned without cause, and desire to breathe the free air, which is denied to none but criminals."

"Do you indeed, Monseigneur?" said Blood, quietly. "Well, and I too should be very glad to take the air of the Mulberry Gardens, at open daylight, but am, nevertheless, obliged to content myself with rambling out at night, like a wehr-wolf, as the musty-headed Germans call it."

"But I have never committed any offence that I should be mewed up like a chicken fattening in a coop!" exclaimed Mervyn, for the ice once broken, even his reasonable dread of the colonel could not prevent the utterance of his pent-up feelings.

"But you are a little Jesuit, my master," said Blood, "and as such fit for enterprises of great mark and moment; and there are fifty pounds blood-money on the capture of all Jesuits. Now, though you are young, boy, you may have heard that the ichneumon destroys the crocodile in the egg, eh? Besides, my dear Ichabod," he added, with a kind of jeering earnestness, "you are at this very moment crossing the huge Atlantic, sold as a slave to a planter in Virginia!"

"What, then, Colonel Blood, am I to be kept a prisoner all my life?" returned Mervyn.

"Something other ails thee, Mervyn, than the mere loss of liberty—which cannot be much to a student of St. Omer?" said Blood, looking at him suspiciously. "You colour, my master!—troth, child, that complexion of yours will never do for this world. Confess the truth—you have heard somewhat of last night's confabulation, and know not what to make of it?"

"'Tis true, colonel," replied Mervyn, resolutely. "I deny it not, and I suspect that you intend to commit some act among you, of I know not what

lawless violence, to support the lies of the black apostate, Oates!"

Blood looked at the young speaker for a moment with a ferocity of expression which made him tremble, but it suddenly changed to its usual crafty calm.

"Thou art right, young Jesuit," he said, with a gloomy smile. "Thou art right—and I am glad, child, you have broached the subject, for I wished to speak to you on it. Learn, Mervyn, that reckless and violent as I may appear to you, I am incapable —that is, I could not do—ahem!—any act that savoured rather of treachery than valour. But I am a poor man, and money at this season is of unspeakable consequence to me. Did you understand against whom this plot was laid?"

"Some puritan magistrate, methought," replied Mervyn, without hesitation. "But the matter seemed knavishly turned against the Duke of York."

"Right again," said Blood, his eye drooping from the steady gaze of Mervyn. "Right again, nephew. But there is something in thy noble frankness of disposition which encourages me to trust thee in something more than a half-confidence. Sheriff Bethel, as he is still called, a most vehement partisan of the faction, is the man who is to be seized; but, Mervyn, I confess to thee, I am only in the plot to betray it! Shaftesbury's bribe is already in

my purse, so that motive's gone; and, nephew, I was born in the catholic church, and intend to die in her forgiving bosom. But our holy mother, Religion, gives nothing for nothing; and what greater service could I do to her, than to expose this monstrous plot, contrived for her overthrow? Ha, Mervyn, do you feel marrow enough in your bones to aid me in this great work?"

"Death itself would be pleasant to me in such a cause!" exclaimed the youth, cajoled by Blood's earnest tone and apparent feeling.

"Oh, we shall not die, but reap a rich reward for our well-doing," replied Blood. "We shall obtain the favour and gratitude of the duke, which, methinks may well be balanced against the giddy patronage of a wild faction, which will provoke the king at last to hang them all like a string of onions. Moreover, child, do you remember in whose company you first saw me?"

"I know not, but it seems to me as if I had seen you long ere these times," replied Mervyn, musingly.

"Pho, pho, child, you never saw me before that night with the king and his merrymen," said Blood, very sharply.

"Well, and as they seemed to treat you with great respect and confidence, I marvel at your ingratitude in joining their enemies," said Mervyn.

"Nay, if you gape at man's ingratitude your

mouth will be wide enough ere you die, boy," returned Blood, with a sardonic laugh. "But in this instance I am the exact opposite of my fellows, —for they appear true and are false, while I appear false and am true. In short, Mervyn, I am devoted soul and body to the court, and all I do is at its dictation, that I may lead the conspirators on to the point whence their own plots may be driven back upon them."

"Good angels!—you are a spy of the court?" exclaimed Mervyn.

"Yes, and of the church, whose redemption is in this hand, stained with blood as some deem it!" said the colonel, raising his hand vehemently, and clutching the air with his deformed thumb and finger.

Mervyn shuddered, and some painful but indistinct thought run through his mind, the traces of which he lost instantly. "Colonel Blood," he replied, mournfully, "you well know that from my childhood holy hands dedicated me to the service of the church; but you do not know what I now tell you—that I would freely shed the last drop of my blood to obtain her forgiveness, and mine own just revenge on that cunning monster, Titus Oates!"

"Why then, dear boy, I will be your coadjutor," exclaimed Blood, seemingly in a transport of delight. "You shall be my medium, my interpreter, and win the applause of all loyal and good men.—

At the same time your desire of change shall be gratified, and I need not sculk about, at the deadly peril of my life, on my difficult negotiations with the court. But before I trust you with my whole mystery, Mervyn, swear to preserve my secret inviolable, against every thing but the rack."

"And the rack too—no torture shall wring aught from me but blood!" said Mervyn, with enthusiastic violence.

"Well then, boy, our royalist counter-plot is also ripe," said the colonel in the same tone. "I have received the king's orders to make a deposition of all I know, concerning this traitorous conspiracy, before a magistrate. Among all the London justices, his majesty selected him before whom Oates made his first deposition—(Sir Edward—what is his name?—Oh, Sir Edward Godfrey) to receive mine; and this because the duke hath done him service, and he is known to be well affected to the royal cause. Thou wilt see—our counterblast will blow up this protestant mine, and spare a whole ocean of innocent catholic blood, beside advancing the great plans of the church. But of this more to-morrow, Mervyn; at present we are both weary, and I would not engage you in my dangerous plans (for they *are* dangerous) without giving you time for due reflection; and so, consult your pillow, and good night."

Pronouncing these words, Blood arose, and handing a torch to Mervyn, began making preparations

for bed, by unclasping the hanger and pistols from his girdle. Knowing that it would be useless to attempt protracting the conversation, Mervyn retired to his dismal chamber, with a somewhat lighter heart than he had left it.

In the morning, when he descended with renovated and brightened looks, he found Blood preparing breakfast. It was not long, however, before he resumed the conversation of the previous night, by inquiring when his new services were to commence.

"This very morning, if you will, son," replied the colonel. "I have received private and sure advice that the Ormondes suspect I am refuged in Alsatia, and spies are about in every direction. Therefore I dare not stir out on peril of my life—yet the king enjoins me to make my deposition in time to save Coleman, and the five attainted Jesuits."

"But how—but how, Mr. Blood?" exclaimed Mervyn.

"I am in possession of certain tokens by which I doubt not to induce Sir Edward—I mean, Sir Edmundbury—to meet me in some privy place, and there take my deposition—if I could find a messenger of fidelity," said Blood slowly, and cautiously eyeing his youthful victim. "But he must be one indeed of fire-proof fidelity and courage, for if the faction do but suspect my purpose, regard for their own lives will compel them to sacrifice mine suddenly. Dost understand, Mervyn?"

"But Sir Edmundbury Godfrey!—why he in particular?" said Mervyn.

"I know no other whose prying disposition, courage, and secret leanings to our cause, would allow him to accede to such a request," replied Blood, quietly. "Moreover, I have here a letter from the Duke of York, assuring him of the perfect safety, and advantage to the king, with which he may comply with my request. But the messenger!—I know not whom to trust on such an errand."

"And what is this messenger expected to do? If it be only to die rather than betray you, Blood, I——" said Mervyn, but he paused suddenly, startled by the cold malicious smile in the colonel's eye. At the same time a vague but momentary suspicion of some darker play flitted over his imagination, but vanished instantly in the bright daylight of his young heart.

"Expected to do, child?" said Blood, affecting not to notice this flash of doubt. "Why, he must be merely a messenger—no tell-tale babbler, prating on all the vain fancies and fears that haunt the brains of idle men. He must in short know nothing—be nothing *but* a messenger—or he may chance to run his neck into a halter. Then you must swear—I mean, if you have heart enough to work your own and the church's triumph—that if the justice will not observe the conditions noted in this paper, that

neither threats nor entreaties shall induce you to guide him or his myrmidons to this den of mine."

"But what conditions are therein noted, Mr. Blood?" said Mervyn; "are they yours or the duke's?"

"Both," replied Blood. "But mine are briefly these—that if he come at all, he come *alone*. I know better than to trust a head with three thousand pounds upon it, within reach of Mother Justice, and that he inform no man whither nor on what purpose he comes. For the duke's, he will not object to them unless he have some peculiar dislike to change his knightship to a baronetcy, and his beggarly justiceship for the mastership of his highness's household."

"I will be your messenger though death pay the postage," said Mervyn, in a tone of solemnity which touched even Blood. "But mark me, colonel! If there be any treason in the core of this mystery, I will not survive the moment which makes me its unconscious instrument. If you mean any wrong beneath this fair seeming, depend on't, I will rather die than suffer it. I will bring all Alsatia about your ears; you shall murder me ere you harm one hair of his head."

"Gad-a-mercy! what manner of talk is this?" said the colonel, staring with partly real and partly affected surprise. "Do you think, sir, I am a mur-

derer by profession, and wish particularly to bring a London mob to hunt me out of Alsatia?"

"No, Blood, I will trust in you," said Mervyn, earnestly. "I will trust in you, if you will swear to me by all your hopes of pardon above, you mean nothing but fair play; for I will throw my life on the die."

"Dost think that such an oath were difficult to take, by a man who could have such designs?" said Blood, grinning. "But be it as you will; I swear it! So may Heaven absolve or condemn me for ever as I mean harm to Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, in life or limb! But now, Mervyn, you must in turn pledge your word that if you fail in your enterprise, you will not attempt to escape—tush! I mean you will return with the news."

"I pledge my honour, Blood!" said Mervyn.

"A Jew would not lend you a penny now on that pawn," said Blood, smiling. "But you are a gentleman of nature's making, and I will take your word sooner than a merchant's bond."

"But what if Sir Edmundbury disbelieve my tale, and have me seized?" said Mervyn.

"He will not—he dare not—after he has read this letter," replied the colonel, producing one sealed with the royal arms. "And if he does, I have the king's pledge that pardon shall be extended to you."

"But how shall I get him to come hither?" said

Mervyn, with lingering hesitation. "Will not the very locality frighten him from coming?"

"'Slife, no, I warrant ye," said the colonel, eagerly. "Why, man, he is in the daily and nightly habit of prowling about the Friary in all manner of disguises; and when he hath marked his game, of a sudden the bloodhounds of the law invade the sanctuary, and sweep away like kites among chickens. Well, well, if you will not go, let Oates rule the roast, and a pretty banquet he will serve at last!"

The very sound of that detested name kindled all Mervyn's passions into a flame, and he consented at once to the colonel's arrangements. It was determined that he should start immediately on his adventure. Blood produced from his wardrobe a short cloak of orange-tawny velvet, embroidered with the royal arms, and a three-cornered hat, with gold plumes, which he said he had procured to disguise him, if he consented to undertake the office. Mervyn put these garments on, not without some little satisfaction at the change effected in his appearance by the magic of dress, and was then conducted by Blood to the gate by which he had originally entered, where he leaped gaily into a boat that seemed waiting, returning Blood's shake, and Good be with ye! but not noticing the dark smile with which the colonel watched him row off, and the private signal he exchanged with the scullermen.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR EDMUNDBURY GODFREY.

It was towards ten o'clock on a Saturday morning when Mervyn reached his destination, and leaping on shore, found himself for the first time abandoned to his own responsibility, in the heart of a great city. The novelty of this position put him in high spirits, and he looked around with a proud and confident look, as if he felt that his time of trial had arrived, and that he should not be found wanting. They were now at Westminster Stairs, and thence one of the watermen directed him to Sir Edmundbury's house, which was at the back of Whitehall Gardens. It was a low building, but exceedingly neat and handsome, surrounded by a pleasant garden, and all the usual appurtenances of a man of some dignity and considerable wealth.

The door was opened by a tall, stiff, puritanical-looking maid, dressed with the most frigid propriety, and quite old and ugly enough to prevent all scandal against the magistrate, who was a widower. Mervyn was admitted instantly, on sending up a message which Blood had taught him, and was conducted into an apartment in which the justice usually transacted his official business. It was bare and unfurnished except a few benches, a desk for the clerk, a high chair for the magistrate, and an old timepiece. Sir Edmundbury was seated at this desk, poring over some papers, with a thick, squat, silver-clasped Bible beside him. Near him sat a tall, hard-featured man, in the dress of an independent minister, with a black skullcap compressing his thin gray hairs. They seemed engaged in conversation, which broke off when Mervyn entered. Salutes were exchanged, and Mervyn observed the minister glance from him to Sir Edmundbury with very marked and emphatic surprise. The youth, however, handed his letter with no other comment than a deep bend, which Sir Edmundbury hastily acknowledged, and broke the seal with visible emotion. He read the contents with a puckered brow, and as it seemed twice before he gave any reply.

"Heaven have mercy on us all!—but to see how He works His will on earth, yea, at times, with visible manifestations!" said he, at last, turning to

the clergyman. "I have but just, as you know, received a severe rating from my Lord Danby for taking Oates's deposition before the council had examined him, and now here are events coming to light which——but I forget, Master Baxter, you are a fautor of the plot."

"But of justice more, brother Godfrey," replied the doctor, emphatically. "If the unhappy and misguided men, now imprisoned on these heinous charges, be innocent, God forbid that one drop of their blood should be shed to save the church itself from ruin! But what new discovery have you made? Ah! brother, brother, I fear it flows from too impure a source to be good and healing waters. This young man wears the duke's livery, I'll warrant me, as well in his heart as on his back."

"I am in the service of no master, but of the cause of truth and justice, sir!" replied Mervyn.

"Nay, then methinks it would have been better policy to leave that glittering garniture at home, especially on a visit to me, sir page," said Godfrey, somewhat peevishly. "But I am warned you know nought of the contents of your charge, and so far well. I must fare out, brother Baxter, for a while; but be not impatient, as you may depend on my word, that this day's work will bring us into good favour with the court and all who love jus-

tice, whose snowy mantle I am bound by mine oath to keep pure, even at the risk of my life."

"And yet beware, my dear friend!—the proverb says, look before you leap," said Baxter, solemnly. "'Tis not for me to question and cross-question you as to your incomings and out-goings, yet I would say—Look to your feet, lest they be entangled unawares in some papistical snare!"

"Nay, Richard, nay!" said Sir Edmundbury, hurriedly; "I have oft enough been in the district whither I am going, and am nothing the worse for it at this time of day. There are matters in this document I may not doubt nor hesitate upon. And deem you this youth looks like a messenger of ill faith?"

"It was of your spiritual not bodily safety I spoke, brother," replied Baxter, coldly. "And for the youth, I dare be pledged he is honest, for he hath honour written very fairly in his countenance. Nay then, go, if your duty be concerned."

"You say you know nought of the matter wherewith this paper charges me, youth?" said Godfrey, eyeing him very earnestly.

"I am to conduct your worship—whither you know—to meet the writer," replied Mervyn.

"If thou, with thine honest face, wilt guarantee my security," began the justice, and then paused with a forced smile, and taking out his snuffbox,

inhaled a long aromatic pinch, adding—" but what canst thou, either to save or slay?"

" I pledge my own life and honour on your worship's perfect security," replied Mervyn.

" Well, then, precious Master Baxter, I must go," said Godfrey, rising and tinkling a little bell beside him. " I shall be home at two o' the day to dine (Rachel, bring my cloak and sword—'tis by the clock) and hope to find you here, brother."

" Prithee let me be thy companion," said Baxter, shifting his position uneasily. " This is a cruel and a remorseless age, and who knows what plans may be afoot against us all, now that the Jesuits find themselves circumvented and destroyed."

" By your leave, that must not be, sir," said Mervyn, firmly.

" No, certainly—no, Richard," said Godfrey, putting on his hat and cloak, which Rachel held, demurely pursing up her mouth beside him. " I am too old a bird to be caught with chaff. But I do not fear harm: the strong faith that walked beside me through the great judgments of fire and plague, and kept me alone, of all those girded with authority, at my post, will preserve me still. If not —His will be done!—my appointed course is run."

He then put on that peculiar hat of his with the gold band, and buckling on his sword, shook hands with Baxter, and prepared to depart.

" Yet I hope thou wilt not leave this staff of spiritual life behind," said Baxter, offering the thick Bible.

"Methinks no Christian pilgrim should venture forth on the sandy deserts of the world, unaccompanied by that most holy and precious pillar of fire walking before him in the darkness of sin!"

Godfrey readily complied, and put the volume in his pocket, muttering it would be necessary to take the depositions, and they left the apartment, Sir Edmundbury repeating his assurance that he should be at home to dinner at two.

They found the sculler waiting for them at Westminster Stairs, where they embarked, and immediately rowed off towards Whitefriars. There was a heavy fog on the river, which prevented the voyagers from distinguishing aught but a confused pile of houses on the shore, and Mervyn was so absorbed in revery, that when the boat ran up the archway of Blood's house, he started, and could scarce imagine they were there. One of the watermen now produced a massive key, which he said the colonel had given him in case he was out when they arrived; Mervyn applied this to the lock, and with some difficulty turned the rusty bolt, while Godfrey looked around with deep and curious attention. The door swung heavily open, and Mervyn invited Godfrey to enter, who complied after a singular pause of hesitation. He then closed the portal with a slam, and bolting it, found himself alone with Sir Edmundbury in the ruined hall of the Haunted House.

CHAPTER VII.

OATES'S VISITATION.

On the morning of the same day on which the events above detailed occurred, Titus Oates, or St. Titus as he was now almost considered by the populace, was observed to creep down the Strand, and finally to enter the shop of Prance the silversmith. He found the poor man as usual very busy, and protesting that he would not disturb him, as he merely came to bring Mrs. Prance the plan of a charitable subscription which he was raising, requested one of the apprentices to announce him. But the events of the few days which had made Oates notorious, had totally altered the relations between him and the fat silversmith. Prance had in reality never liked him; but dread of his wife, and anxiety to conceal his popish tendencies, had made him assume

great cordiality towards Oates. Now, however, he regarded him as little less terrible than the fiend incarnate himself, and therefore treated him with a lavish cordiality that even astonished the doctor. Apologizing again and again on the score of urgent business, he escorted him to the door of his wife's sitting-room, and left him, with as deep a sense of relief as if escaping from the rack.

Oates knocked modestly at the door, and a female voice, mild with suppressed ill-temper, invited him to enter. Mrs. Prance was seated at a comfortable fire, engaged in knitting a pair of scarlet stockings; but her jolly matronly visage grew still ruddier when she saw the reverend visiter enter.

"Keep your seat, sister, keep your seat," he said in a tone of condescending importance. "I am the same poor sarvant of the Loard whom ye were the first to receive with honour. Is the diamond's value increased because that the jeweller hath polished it? But ye have doubtless heard what hath happened, and how I have been called upon to take up my testimony, and become a prophet in Israel."

"We have heard indeed, Master Oates, with most sincere upliftings of the heart," said Mrs. Prance, with a sigh. "But how you can spare me a moment's precious time from your weeding and pruning in the vineyard, is indeed the crown of goodness, and a precious sign of humility."

"My present errand, sister Susan," said Oates,

solemnly, "is nothing less than the salvation of your husband, and yourself too, from ruin and beggary!"

"What mean you, Master Oates?" said the matron, letting her work fall, and eyeing the saint with peculiar earnestness.

"Be not thrown of a heap; I intend you no harm, but good," replied Oates, taking her fat white hand and pressing it tenderly in his own. "You know I have always regarded you with—with a brother's love—a holy friendship passing the love of carnal men. You know too that I am now powerful to save or slay—that a word of mine—or at least an oath—could send your husband to the gallows, and make you a widow in the prime of your years and beauty."

"La! you, Mr. Oates? I hope not," said Mrs. Prance, with a slight dimple in her plump cheek. "I am sure I should look horrid in black weeds; and poor dear Prance! I am sure it makes me cry like an onion just to think of it."

"Your husband is in danger, Susan; his practices have been discovered!" said Oates, emphatically. "Something more than his life is at stake; for, when his servings at the altar of Egyptian idols is discovered, his property as well as his neck is forfeit to the crown."

"Save us, Mr. Oates! you don't mean that?" exclaimed Mrs. Prance, considerably alarmed.

"But I do, sister Susan," said Oates; "his ter-

giversations and dealings with the traitorous Jesuits are known in the quarter whence blows this blustering wind whereon I ride. It is in design to bring upon him all the horrors of popish recusancy!"

"Goodness gracious! and what can be done? Dear doctor! what can we do?"

"*We?*" said Oates. "*We! I* can do nothing, Mrs. Prance, unless I had some better claim to interfere than any I dare allege. If, indeed, he could be detected in some overt act which might place him in our power, I might have hopes to use the influence thus acquired to save you from ruin, and him from utter destruction in this world and the next."

"But how!—would you see him at mass in the queen's chapel?" said the matron, eagerly.

"No, no; I would not catch him in a crime of such dreadful consequence for fifty shekels!" replied the worthy, with a cunning smile; "I would merely detect him in some trifling act which would demonstrate his connexion with the party, and then I might use the authority so acquired to represent to him gently, as a brother to his brother, the danger and error of such popish dealings, and lead him kindly back to the sanctuary."

"But how can this be managed, precious Master Oates?" said Mrs. Prance, wiping her eyes in her apron.

" A thought strikes me, Susan," replied the doctor, soothingly; " dry those bright jewels, my dear sister in love, and be comforted. Have I not heard you say that, during the absence of Gadden, the Jesuit, from Somerset House, your husband keeps the keys of his apartments?"

" Ay, truly, dear Oates! but you swore by every thing, you would never tell it," said Mrs. Prance, visibly alarmed.

" Tut, foolish woman!" said Oates, peevishly, " but we must use a little honest artifice. Tell Prance, as if from the Duke of York, that the banished Jesuit hath suddenly returned in secret; that he needs the keys of his apartments; and, that he must be with them at midnight in the court at Somerset House. Then, instead of Gadden, I will meet him; and thus taken in flagrant delict, I shall obtain and use an authority to bring him to a sense of his errors. After that, perchance, for he must know much, I may associate him in my grand crusade against the Jesuits, which is like to be a profitable as well as holy work."

Mrs. Prance listened to this crafty proposal with considerable doubt, as appeared in her countenance. With all her unbounded respect for her religious adviser, his proposal staggered her; for there is always an indefinable want of probability in the most artfully concocted falsehood, which mingles a grain of

doubt in the most implicit swallower's draught. But the cajoling tongue and promises of Oates, and above all the terror and majesty which his recent exploits had conferred on him, finally induced her to promise as he desired. And thus the interview terminated, at least so far as our chronicles are concerned.

CHAPTER VIII.

GODFREY'S LAST EXCURSION IN ALSATIA.

ALMOST at the moment when Oates concluded his agreement with sister Susan, the unconscious object of its crafty provisions followed Mervyn into Blood's house. He looked round, at first somewhat surprised at the silence and desolation which seemed to reign; but without saying any thing, he followed the youth, who ascended to the apartment where he expected to find the colonel. Mervyn thought as they reached the corridor that he heard the door below locked after them, but after an instant's hesitation, imputing it to the nervous state of his feelings, he hurried on.

They entered the Painted Chamber, where Mervyn expected with certainty to find Blood, but to his surprise it was quite deserted, a few embers in

the grate being the only sign of habitation. He concealed his surprise, however, and observing to Sir Edmundbury that the gentleman who was to meet him must have been detained by some accident, began blowing the embers into a flame.

Whilst he was thus engaged, Godfrey seated himself, shivering apparently with cold, and cast a long and anxious gaze round the apartment.

"Is not this the old ruinous house," said he, with a slight shudder, "that is known in Whitefriars as 'Aumerle's Folly?'"

"I never heard it called aught but the Haunted House," said Mervyn. "But these Aumerles seem to have been a great family; wherever I go I hear something of them."

"Yea, a great and glorious race, of a blood which has flowed, untarnished with Norman mixture, since the Heptarchy," replied Godfrey. "It is their proud boast that not a drop of the base and rabble blood of the adventurers who accompanied William the Bastard on his conquest, has ever tainted the course of their pure descent. They are as English, sir, as the oaks. I should know something of them; my grandfather was for half a century their chief steward, and dwelt in this house."

"But they are extinct now—all?" said Mervyn, with an anxiety for which he himself could not account.

"My Lady Howard is their last descendant and

heir," replied Godfrey. "And as she is the last so is she as it were the essence of all their good and bad qualities. She abandoned her most noble, wealthy, and loving husband for the poor prodigal, Howard; and when death broke her chains, conferred herself and all her wealth on her seducer! But I marvel at this choice of a meeting-place. The house hath an evil report."

"But surely your worship is not afraid of ghosts?" said Mervyn.

"Why what manner of ghost do they say haunts here?" said Godfrey, musingly.

"Oh, a thin old man with a long gray beard, dressed in russet, with a pair of large leaden buckles in his shoes," said Mervyn, trying to force a laugh.

"Ay, such I recollect my unhappy grandfather," replied Sir Edmundbury.

"What, are you a descendant of the old miser, sir?" exclaimed Mervyn.

"Are you alone of all this scandalous city ignorant of that?" replied Godfrey, with melancholy gravity. "I am the son of that miserable wretch who imbrued his hand in a father's blood, and, flying the just punishment of his offence, joined the unbelieving Turk, and fell under his banner at Belgrade."

"God assoil him, if it may be!" said Mervyn, crossing himself.

"Amen!" said Godfrey. "But still it puzzles

me that the Duke should invite me to a meeting hither."

"Duke, sir! what duke?" said Mervyn, noticing this word for the first time.

"I see, boy, you are not admitted into the secret," replied Godfrey. "Time will explain all. But be not curious to learn the dangerous secrets of state, for great men heed not what innocent flowers they trample on their way to triumph."

"Pray you, worshipful sir, explain the matter to me," said Mervyn, earnestly. "I dread no consequence to myself, but to you. Tell me, did you expect to meet the Duke of Monmouth here?"

"Now, Heaven forbid!" said Godfrey, with a start.

He was then silent, and remained for some time plunged in profound and gloomy cogitation which Mervyn cared not to interrupt, being busied in his own troubled fancies. During this pause he stirred the fire mechanically, and while so doing, heard the distant bell of St. Paul's toll three o'clock.

Godfrey counted the strokes on his finger, and then observed with a smile, "How often in my childhood have I listened to that solemn toll as it swung over the waters, and wondered from what remote world it came. But the duke is late to keep his appointment. I warrant me now, if this were a fair lady instead of an old magistrate—but I sup-

pose that weary business of the Dutch battle keeps him at the admiralty."

"And in addition, your worship's dinner-hour is past," said Mervyn. "But though we are not superfluously well off for furniture in this den of ours, Heaven be praised we have plenty of creature-comforts, and to spare for a friend;" and Mervyn produced the contents of his larder, together with a tankard of sparkling claret.

The old man eagerly swallowed a goblet of the wine, and grew by degrees more cheerful as the claret and a venison pasty disappeared under their exertions.

As they chatted away over their repast, the deepening darkness of nightfall increased the natural gloom of the apartment, and the conversation began unconsciously to take a more sombre tinge. Mervyn in secret grew more and more uneasy, for he could divine no probable reason for Blood's prolonged absence; although it seemed to argue the integrity of his purpose. Godfrey, too, had his under-current of thought which rippled on the surface of the conversation, and sometimes disturbed its flow. In fact, the dialogue gradually dropped away into monosyllables, and, finally, into revery.

This silence lasted some minutes, and was broken by Godfrey, who drew from his pocket the Sacred Volume with which Baxter had furnished him. "It was well done of that reverend man," he said,

"to arm me with this blessed stormer of salvation. Cased in its promises as in complete steel, did I, in the time of the great plague, stand at my post when all my comrades had fled, and confronted the invisible arrows of death without one moment's trembling of purpose. And this remembrance, youth, is now one of the sweetest consolations of my sorrowful old age, and will stand like an angel of light breathing celestial peace over my deathbed! And know, my son," he added, with peculiar solemnity, "know that when all the power and riches of this world fail to yield us a single balmy thought of comfort, the recollection of one good deed smells as sweetly in the nostrils of Death as violets to a young bride. Read me some portion—unless indeed you dare trust no version of this good Book but that which hath Douay on its title-page?"

"Nay, I do fear no basilisk in a twist of type," said Mervyn, affected by the old man's earnestness. "Where shall I read?"

"Open at hazard, child; thou canst light on nought but what is good," said Sir Edmundbury. "I will but trespass on your patience another half hour, and then if his highness comes not, depart."

Mervyn opened and began reading, and by a curious coincidence, the first words which he lighted upon was that terrible denunciation of a vengeance which was to visit the iniquities of the father on the

children, to the third and fourth generations. He broke off abruptly, and Godfrey smiled but with a ghastly expression, as he bade him read on. "I am not afraid to hear the truth, boy," he said, "though doubtless that denunciation is the darkest shadow on my life's path. But what can be the meaning of this long delay? It is growing late!" he added, abruptly, for a sudden flash of the fiery embers showed him how dark the apartment had become.

"I know not," replied Mervyn. "I did expect to find the colonel waiting us here."

"The colonel!—what colonel?" exclaimed Sir Edmundbury in some surprise; but presently he added, "Oh, I see into your caution; but you carry it too far. I tell you, the duke in his letter told me of your quality, and bade me trust myself implicitly to your guidance."

"Duke! what duke?" exclaimed the bewildered Mervyn.

"The Duke of York, boy, with whom I was to meet and discuss certain matters concerning Coleman's trial, and how he might be aided against the villanous perjurer, Oates."

"Holy Virgin!—the duke? Were you not told —I mean, did you come hither—to receive the deposition of Colonel Blood?"

"Colonel Blood!—it were better for me to meet a famished tiger," replied Godfrey, suddenly paus-

ing. "Youth, thou hast not a traitor's countenance —but I tell you I had rather face the devil in person! Why, 'tis I who have been foremost in hunting him for his audacious attempt on the Duke of Ormonde, and I have heard he hath sworn to have my blood or shed the last drop of his own."

"Is this possible?" exclaimed Mervyn, whitening to a statue. "No, no; there must be some fiendish deceit in this. I never saw the Duke of York in my life."

Mervyn then, with a pathetic earnestness, which persuaded the old and experienced magistrate of his truth, briefly related the circumstances which had made him Blood's prisoner or guest—the consultation which he had overheard—and the artifice by which Blood induced him to be his messenger.

"I see it all!" exclaimed Sir Edmundbury, "I am brought here like an ox to the slaughter-house. I see it all, child, but I acquit thee of any share in my destruction. But, O God! be merciful to my soul, for I know that the gloomy drama of my life approaches a darker catastrophe. The politic villain counterfeited the duke's handwriting; and I have little doubt, poor orphan, but that he reserves you, too, for destruction."

"Why then, save yourself!" exclaimed Mervyn, vehemently. "Let us fly, ere these monsters return."

"I doubt they have taken their measures bet-

ter than that," replied Godfrey, shaking his head. "But do not weep, youth. I acquit you of all blame, and only marvel at mine own rash folly."

"But I do not acquit myself!" said Mervyn, passionately. "And if you have courage, as they say you have even to rashness, you may yet escape! There is a way out where there's a way in."

"But no boat," said Godfrey, calmly.

"But one may pass within hail," exclaimed the youth, snatching up a burning stake. "Follow me; we can try at least."

Godfrey complied, though it was evident he did not anticipate any favourable result, and they passed the corridor to the hall. But they found his fears realized; the massive portal was impenetrably barred and bolted on the exterior, and after exhausting themselves in fruitless efforts to break it open, they were obliged to desist.

"It is in vain to struggle with destiny," said Godfrey, at last. "The game must be played out. All my life hath a foreboding of this moment hung over me, and it finds me not unprepared."

"Let us not yet despair," said Mervyn, hurriedly, "a few minutes may remain. Can we not find —do you not remember some exit from the house on the land side?"

"There is one through the back staircase of the

Painted Chamber," said Godfrey, after a moment's musing. "But I'll warrant me, 'tis as well secured as the water-gate."

The same conclusion instantly occurred to Mervyn, for he knew the staircase in question was that through which Blood made his exits. Still there was a straw of hope in the thought, which he eagerly caught at, and he ran wildly back to the apartment, followed by Godfrey at a slower pace. A door of almost equal strength to that on the water-side, bolted and barred on the exterior, baffled their hopes, and Godfrey seated himself with stubborn resignation. But Mervyn was not yet at the end of his resources. His versatile imagination suggested another.

"The house is large, intricate, scarcely known to Blood or his associates," he said. "If you could but conceal yourself, Sir Edmundbury, I would fain that you would not come, or that you suspected something wrong and are gone—any thing rather than that they should find you here."

"And where can I hide me? they will search the very holes and creeks of the door," replied Godfrey.

Mervyn hesitated as the recollection of the apartments he had lately traversed occurred to him, and then suggested them as a hiding-place, hastily describing their position, and the advantages they

offered for concealment. As he spoke, however, Godfrey looked at him with a vacant ghastly look, and merely muttering,

"I had rather die than enter that horrible chamber," he arose and tottered to the door, adding in the same perturbed tone—"But follow me—follow me. I do remember there is a loft and a trap-door, by which I can get out on the roof—they will hardly seek me there."

Mervyn, though scarcely aware of what he was to do, snatched up a lamp which he lighted; but Sir Edmundbury was already in the corridor, stumbling up the ruined staircase. Mervyn followed him rapidly, and saw him open the door of the granary in which he had himself emerged on his escape from the miser's apartments. He entered, and found Godfrey groping about the walls, evidently bewildered with terror. He snatched the lamp and held it aloft, searching the massive timbers of the roof. Mervyn instantly perceived the frame of a trap-door covered with spider-webs and loose straws, but in the middle of the roof, at a considerable height above them. He pointed it out to Godfrey, who gave an exclamation of joy, handed him the torch, and looked around for some means of ascent. But there was no ladder, no loose planks, no furniture of whatever sort, by which it might be possible to reach the trap-door.

At the moment when a deliberate survey and emphatic exchange of looks convinced them of this dreadful fact, the slam of a door in the apartment below was heard, and both started as if shot. An instant of breathless silence followed, and the sound of footsteps and voices was distinctly heard.

"I am lost—the bloodhounds are on me!" whispered Godfrey, in a tone which thrilled through Mervyn's very marrow. "They are below."

The youth made no reply, but set the lamp down, stepped silently over the chamber, and knelt to his former hole of observation. The justice of their conjectures then appeared. The door of Blood's staircase was just slowly opening, and by the gleam of the red fire down it, he saw several men in black masks, with naked swords glittering in their hands. He started up and saw that Godfrey was kneeling at another chink, and peering into the apartment below.

"Get up—get up!" gasped Mervyn, almost speechless with horror. "It is not yet too late, Sir Edmundbury!—Save your own life and mine!—Go down these steps—hither—to the miser's chamber below! They will not suspect you there; and if they do, resistance may be made. They can only enter one way—down this step-ladder, one at a time, and you may lawfully plunge your sword

into them as they descend. For Heaven's sake bide not their fury. Hide yourself—under the bed, in the bed—they dare not suspect you there!"

Young and almost powerless with fear as he was, he drew Godfrey on, as it were by fascination, to the trap-door whence he remembered to have emerged from the miser's apartment, and pointed down, without uttering a word. Godfrey hesitated still a moment, but a shout from the apartment below—Blood's voice calling "Mervyn!" in its most tremendous tones—seemed to exercise a mechanical sway over him. He set his foot on the narrow step, thrust his large lean form with some difficulty into the hole, and began descending, while Mervyn held the lamp, and kept hold of his cloak, as if with the idea of thereby aiding him. On seeing him safe at the bottom, Mervyn in some degree recovered his self-possession, and kneeling down, he threw the light of the lamp as far as possible into the dreary chamber, and saw Sir Godfrey hide himself beneath the miserable coverings of the old miser's bed. Almost at the same moment he heard the voice of Blood, calling his name in louder and more exasperated tones. He paused one dreadful moment to listen, and heard heavy footsteps coming up the corridor. It was barely possible that he might reach his own apartment ere they entered and found him on a spot which would put them on the scent of their victim; and he rushed to the door. But the same

instant it swung violently open, and four men, armed and masked, as he had seen in the apartment below, rushed in.

"Where is Godfrey, boy?" shouted a voice, whose detested tones roused all his remaining courage to desperation.

"Where I hope you shall not find him, devil!" he retorted, in a tone of defiance and energy, which startled them all.

"Villain! hast thou betrayed us?" exclaimed the foremost mask, whose terrible voice could belong to no one but Blood.

"Villain, in thy face again, thou black betrayer!" shouted Mervyn, his eyes sparkling fire. "Godfrey is gone—fled—I have saved him, and I glory in it! I discovered your murderous intentions in time to prevent them—and now do your worst!"

"Hell and fury, brat! what hast thou dared to do?" yelled Blood, raising his massive fist, and seeming as if he needed but a word to crush the youth into atoms.

"If you strike, Blood, I will strike again!" exclaimed the heroic stripling, raising his arm, and looking at the colonel with a resolute expression of rage and defiance.

"Boy!" shouted Blood, clutching his wrist, and almost paralyzing it in his vice-like pressure. "Thou knowest not, thou madman by inheritance!—that a

blow, a single blow, cost thy father his life, and that which he loved dearer—his honour!"

"Let me have the mauling of the young reprobate," said Oates, pushing forward. "I'll warrant I'll teach him his duty to lawful superiors—the young popish Jesuit plotter!"

"Hands off, Master Oates, an you care not to see your nose as flat as your forehead," said Blood, shaking loose the murderous clutch which Oates had fixed in the boy's neck. "None shall harm him that hath not first made an oyster of my throat. But now tell me, dear Mervyn, on your life tell me, what have you done with the old man? I have come to bear the testimony you wot of, and these gentlemen are present as witnesses."

"Why then is this accursed wretch of your company?" exclaimed Mervyn. "No, Blood, I tell you, I have discovered your cruel, perfidious plot, and Godfrey has escaped by my means."

"'Slud and 'oonds! then we are all lost—we shall be hanged to a man!" groaned Oates.

"Why then the devil and the hangman will get their due!" replied Mervyn, scorn and hatred flashing in his fine eyes.

"But 'tain't possible—the old un can't have bilked us!" said another of the masks, whom Mervyn had no difficulty in recognising as Bedlow, the waterman. "I bolted the water-gate, and t'other

way would take a barrel of gunpowder to burst open."

"Bedlow is right—he must be concealed in the house," exclaimed Blood. "Hunt, search, lads; our very lives depend upon the matter."

"All your search will be in vain," exclaimed Mervyn, forgetting in his agitation the peculiar position of the house. "He has escaped through the trap-door, by the roof—search away! Long ere this he is out of your power—but I trust you will soon be in his."

"Give me your torch, Bedlow!—if he got on the roof, he must be still there," said Blood, deliberately. "The house is completely isolated—surrounded by garden and water—he cannot escape us, except by breaking his neck."

"But how could Godfrey get up to the trap-door?" exclaimed Oates, peering upward with his villanous eyes. "There are no means that I can see, unless he crawled up like a rat."

"He is a tall man, and with this young rogue's assistance, might reach those beams, and thence swing himself up," exclaimed Blood, laughing and rubbing his hands. "So we have him now. Oates, lend me a lift of your brawny shoulders. Bedlow, keep the kid in order."

Brother Titus readily complied with this request, and Blood springing from his broad back as from a

stepping-stone, seized hold of a cross plank, and thrust himself up among the timbers of the roof. Clinging only to the frail support of some loose rafters, he succeeded in reaching the trap-door, and found it firmly secured with rusty bars. Mervyn's account of the escape was obviously impossible. Thundering out a terrible volley of curses, the ruffian communicated this fact to his fellows below, and dropping his bulky frame the whole length of his arm, he fell the height that remained without inconvenience. He then clutched hold of Mervyn's collar, and, shaking him severely, swore that if he did not tell the truth instantly he would dash him to pieces.

"Do what you will, villains, I have no means to resist you," said Mervyn, doggedly; but as he spoke an idea occurred to him, and he added, "murder me if you will, but you cannot prevent Sir Edmundbury's escape. He knew too well the secrets of this house not to take my warning, and he leaped out of the balcony below into the river."

"Why, then, he must be drowned, for every body knows Sir Edmund cannot swim!" said Oates, with malicious exultation.

"Say, rather, dashed to pieces, man, for it is low water," said Blood, gloomily. "At any rate we will go and examine; but if he is dead, his blood be on his own obstinate old iron skull-piece, and the young fool that persuaded him."

He then, considerably to Mervyn's surprise, who had hoped they could find only ingress by the well, moved directly to the trap-door, and after casting a diligent look below, proposed to descend. He had some difficulty, however, in thrusting his bulky body in; and that accomplished, with many bitter curses at the lean old miser who had planned it, he still seemed afraid to venture in the dark, and took the lamp from Bedlow. That worthy also followed with Oates, who showed considerable reluctance, which was only overcome by a greater dread of rousing Blood's wrath. Mervyn followed, believing he should thereby show less apprehension, and crossed the apartment to the open balcony, without daring to cast a glance at the bed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST VICTIM OF THE POPISH PLOT.

Mervyn found the colonel hanging over the balustrade, and throwing the light of his torch as far as possible down the river, as if to break the shadows, and, perhaps, expecting to behold the old man's mangled body. The moon shone through a white mist, and showed nothing clearly, but Mervyn saw that it was ebb-tide, and that nought was visible below but the green slimy foundations of the house, and wavy mud strewed with weeds and rubbish. A careful survey soon convinced Blood that the object he expected was not there, and he returned to his former opinion. Accordingly the assassins resumed their search, and, at Oates's suggestion, in the miser's chamber.

During the rigid examination which ensued—and they looked under the bed, on the framework, up the chimney, in all the nooks and crannies of the ancient chamber—Mervyn suffered the extreme agonies of fear and suspense. With admirable nerve, however, he showed no emotion, uttered no word, which might by any chance direct them in their search. By a curious neglect which yet frequently happens in similar cases of hurried research, Blood and his accomplices forgot to look in the bed; and Godfrey lay so flat and motionless, and the bed seemed so undisturbed, that no one thought of examining it.

"He is not here at all events," said Blood at last, throwing himself into a chair, "he has escaped, though I cannot divine how."

"Why, if you think he has escaped, colonel," said Oates, in evident terror, "I think we had better escape too. There is nothing for us but flight; for, on the least peril, our party will disavow us, and send us to the gallows to prove their own innocence."

"Thou art ever for keeping the rascal in those villanous ill-shaped limbs of thine!" said Blood bitterly. "But that is not the way that men of honour and courage get out of their difficulties. So then, Master Mervyn, this ancient gentleman has escaped by your connivance? Ha, what is here? So! the saint has left his bible behind him?" And he raised

the volume which we have already mentioned, and after a moment's examination handed it to Oates.

"Well—he hath left it behind him," said Mervyn, as the colonel's eye again fell upon him. "And if you were wise, Blood, you would join in my thanksgiving; for you are thereby saved from blood-guiltiness, and the direful everlasting punishment denounced by Heaven against murderers!"

The colonel's face flushed a deep crimson, and he muttered something which no one distinctly heard, but he added in a milder tone, "And prithee what hast thou revealed to the old scarecrow, most sapient sir?"

"Nothing but what was necessary to make him understand his danger and fly from it," replied Mervyn.

"What is to be done, colonel?" faltered Oates. "By this time, if ever, the old man will be at home, and about despatching his musketeers to seize us for gallows fruit. What must we do?"

"Any thing but run away, Oates," replied Blood, scornfully. "Let us all be firm, and we can easily outface the mad old graybeard. Courage, Titus! dost thou pretend to raise the devil, and run away at a whisk of his tail?"

"I cannot think he has got out of the house," said Bedlow.

"Nor I," said Blood. "Come, gentlemen, let us

search the mansion, the cellar, the boy's hammock—everywhere."

This command seemed to remove a mountain of lead from Mervyn's heart, and he followed the clumsy ascent of Oates with indescribable satisfaction. Still he could scarcely believe in this extraordinary escape, until Blood himself, last of the band, sprang out of the loft, and secured the trap-door after him. The ruffians then proceeded on a deliberate ransacking of the house, poking with their swords into every hole and corner that might by possibility afford a hiding-place; Mervyn awaiting the result in the Painted Chamber, every sound causing him to shake like an aspen. Nearly an hour had past in this manner, and his palpitating nerves were beginning to calm down, when suddenly he heard a dismal shriek, or rather yell, which he knew at once to be in Godfrey's tones. At the same moment he heard a rush upstairs, and Blood ran past with two or three of his confederates, shouting "There he is—whoop, whoop!"

Mervyn's hair actually bristled on his head, and in an instant—he knew no more how than in a wild dream—he found himself in the Haunted Chamber. A horrible spectacle awaited him. Blood was already grasping Sir Edmundbury's shoulder, who was sitting upright in the bed, ghastly pale, his eyes nearly out of his head, his hands clasped. his whole

frame convulsed as if in an ague-fit, shouting and yelling at the top of his voice.

" He is my prisoner! Sir Edmund, yield, since you have no resource, and no harm shall be done to you."

" Keep him off!—keep him off!" yelled Godfrey, making no resistance, nor sign of resistance, as if unconscious of the colonel's presence, and pointing forward into the vacant air. " Keep him off! Oh, in mercy's name, let him not clutch me with those long lean hands!" sobbed Godfrey, whose voice was now almost inarticulate.

" What the fiend does he see?" muttered Oates, drawing near to Blood.

" Do but look at him yonder, the lean old pale man, with his shrivelled limbs, and cold glittering eyes," said Godfrey, sobbing exhaustedly. " Why dost thou grin and mouth at me? I did not do it, sir! 'tis not my crime, though my father slew you!"

" He is ripe for Bedlam; bind and gag him!" said Blood, impatiently turning away.

Mervyn in the confusion and horror of his mind knew not what to do, and gazed in a stupified manner while Oates and Bedlow bound their victim, whose yells had now subsided into idiotic murmurs.

A slight pause followed, for it seemed impossible to get Sir Edmundbury out of the chamber, bound as he was hand and foot. At length Blood loosened the thongs, and ordered Godfrey to mount the

stairs, Oates going first to receive him. The unfortunate prisoner mechanically obeyed, and the whole band followed, Mervyn being dragged along by Bedlow, in a state bordering on unconsciousness, and all proceeded to the water-gate, Blood grasping his prisoner by the belt. Mervyn afterwards recollected that they crossed the mud on a plank, and found a boat moored on the edge of the water. All got into it, and Bedlow and Oates seizing the oars, they shot out over the water, which was scarcely visible in the heavy mist.

The voyage seemed to Mervyn's bewildered fancy interminably long, and all the while not a word was spoken. Godfrey seemed to sit in a state of stupefaction, but Mervyn thought there was something in his lack-lustre eyes which seemed to reproach him. On a sudden the boat grounded on a sloping jetty, and looking up, Mervyn saw piles of dim and lofty architecture towering in the ghostly mistiness of the moonlight. An exclamation from the colonel informed him that it was Somerset House, then the residence of the queen and her popish court, as it was styled by the populace.

Oates gave a low whistle as they landed; a gate instantly opened on the left, and a man appeared with a dark lantern and a bunch of keys. Mervyn now concluded that his senses were totally disordered, for he thought he recognised in the pale suspicious features of the person who appeared, Prance, the

silversmith! Whoever he might be, he started back in great alarm, but was instantly seized by Blood.

"On your life, stir not, booby! a pistol is at your head," said the colonel. "You have nothing to do but show us Gadden's apartment; all we do is by the duke's order."

"But—but—I—I never heard of this!" exclaimed the man, gazing with terror at Sir Edmundbury, "and—and—if there is to be bloodshed I can't bear to look at it—I can't. I could never endure to see a calf killed, though my father was a butcher—I can't!"

"Why, fool! thou wilt be present some day at thine own death," muttered Blood. "But there is no killing in the case. Hast the key of Gadden's rooms—speak!—lead the way—this instant!"

The man made no further demur, but admitted the whole party into a narrow terraced garden before the palace, Godfrey mechanically obeying every direction of his captors. They entered the palace by a court, arched around, at the end of which they past a sentinel, and entered another narrow court surrounded by lofty towers. Sir Edmundbury had hitherto behaved with perfect passiveness, as if unconscious of what was happening, though Mervyn fancied once or twice, from the expression of his eye, that his reason was returning. Unluckily, at the moment they entered the archway Godfrey caught an indistinct view of the sentinel, and the hope of

liberation probably flashed upon him. He, Blood, and Oates, were some yards in advance of Mervyn and Bedlow, when the former beheld him suddenly wrench himself by a desperate effort from their grasp, and shouting "Help, murther, help!" attempt to draw his sword.

All that followed long afterwards appeared to Mervyn like the phantasmagoria of some hideous dream. He saw Blood strike Sir Edmundbury with a bludgeon, who reeled back still yelling for assistance, and shouting that he knew them—calling them by their names! He then heard Oates exclaim "Down with him—he knows us!" and all four rushed upon him, and the unhappy man fell struggling, with one deep suffocated yell. Mervyn attempted to spring forward, but he was seized by his guard—he tried to shriek murder! but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. After this he recollected seeing Oates kneeling on Sir Edmundbury's breast, who was struggling violently, and then Blood hit him another blow on the head, while Bedlow and the two watermen tugged at each end of the victim's cravat. Some faint remembrance he had of Prance wringing his hands and moaning, near the assassins—and then there was a faint choking gurgle—but Mervyn saw no more, for he fell senseless on the pavement.

CHAPTER X.

CONSCIENCE AND POLITICS.

Mervyn's first dawn of recollection was accompanied by a sensation of extreme cold, and raising himself on his elbows, he saw that he was in a boat rowed by two of the masks, whom with a deadly sickness of heart he recognised as Oates and Blood. After this he lay for some time in a state of dreamy stupor, during which the assassins discoursed, but he distinguished no sounds save a continued whisper. At last he was conscious that Blood lifted him in his arms, and carried him up a flight of steps, and then his recollection faded away, until suddenly he found himself lying on a heap of straw. Something he afterwards remembered, of a hideous, shrivelled old man, with a long gray beard, who

held a sponge to his nose, and felt his pulse. But the shock which he had sustained again overpowered his young strength, and he relapsed into insensibility. To this succeeded a wild and troubled sleep, haunted by dreams of unsurpassable horror, and which lasted he knew not how long; but finally he awoke with a start, imagining himself sinking into a deep gulf of the ocean, with a roar of winds and whirling waves heaping upon him.

This terrible fancy was succeeded by faint glimpses of memory, and the events which he had witnessed rushed in confused masses to his mind's eye. At first he thought he was but recollecting a dream of singular horror; but the reality of all that had happened rushed overpoweringly upon him, when he suddenly caught the tone of Oates's voice in a murmuring discourse, which was going on for some time before he took any distinct notice of it. He raised his swimming head, and gazing intently round, perceived that he was in the Painted Chamber, on the colonel's bed, or rather lair. At the opposite side of the chamber, near a bright fire, sat that person, engaged in conversation with Oates. The first words he distinguished clearly took the form of a muttered curse from Blood, followed by a short pause, and then a question which Mervyn instantly understood to relate to the Earl of Shaftesbury.

"Oh, it is of no use—old Aldersgate won't bite," replied Oates. "I tried him every way, short of a

direct confession. But it is vain to think of coaxing a serpent into a net; he is too cautious to enter where there is a smell of blood. When I answered his inquiry how old Bent-back was stowed, he would not understand my muffled hints, but cuts me short with a declaration, that if he thought we had hurt a hair of his head, he would have us all discovered, and sling us on the gallows like so many onions in a market bunch."

"Old Aldersgate were like enough to do that," said Blood, quietly. "He is of that godly school of villany which, when it hath wrought the deed, flings away the instrument abhorrently. He will be glad of an excuse to be rid of us, Master Oates."

"Yet he hath an open hand, this prince in Israel," replied the doctor. "Look you here!—he would understand no further but that we had captured the old beak; and for that small service, he counts me down forty French pistoles. I saw, though, that he was deadly pale, as if he understood me but too well, and the thoughtless Duke of Monmouth, who was there, laughed heartily, and gave me this curious chased ring. And then he said he supposed the old gentleman was hungry by this time, and so it would be but common *politesse* to write an account of his afflicting situation to my Lord Danby, accusing the Duke of York, and pointing out where the old victim might be found."

"Anonymously, of course?" said Blood, and Oates nodded his head.

"Ay; but under existing circumstances that will not do," exclaimed the colonel, in his usual unconcerned tone. "I am certain the earl will shrink out of this business, and he is sufficiently versed in the tricks of justice to betray you, Oates, without implicating himself. Besides, a murderer's shoes are always red, and leave traces which sooner or later set the hounds of the law on his track."

"Prithee, master colonel," said Oates, hastily, "have the goodness to recollect that you are as deep in the mud as I am in the mire."

"Why, villain, you dare not pretend that I took any part in the actual murder? that I had any idea of *that* when I undertook the job?" exclaimed Blood, fiercely.

"And had I?" said Oates, in a low and very meek tone.

"But who held the poor old man, I should like to know?" continued the colonel, in his raised voice. "Who wrung his neck like a barn-door fowl's, Master Oates?"

"And who aided and abetted? Who stunned the old gentleman with a blow enough to fell an ox, colonel?" retorted Titus. "Not that I blame you for it, for the whole ploat, the saulvation of this country and our blessed reformed religion, depended on it."

"Don't sicken me with this murderous cant, Oates," interrupted the colonel. "Well, I grant you that we did it all with the best intentions—so let them go to pave our way in the other world. At present our business is to cheat the devil. We must make the politic earl himself believe that the papists have really slain the stiff old carl—or at least give him a pretext for feigning so."

"But, how?" exclaimed the doctor—"how?"

"Why, you know that Godfrey is now apparently in the custody of the popish party, in Gadden's chamber," replied the colonel, musingly. "That fool, Prance, believes us employed by York—his disguised servants in fact.—Oates, we must remove the body to some ditch in the fields, and leave it there, for chance, in the shape of a dog or a cow, to discover."

"But will not our cunning be too paulpable? Shall we not be betrayed by some finger in the dark pointing at us?" said Oates, shuddering.

"I oft do marvel how so great a coward as thou art, became so matchless a villain!" exclaimed Blood. "But so it is! Why, man, we will take such precautions that at the great day the whole world shall stand amazed to hear we did it!—We will leave him in the fields at St. Pancras, with his sword through his body, as if the papists wished men to think he did it with his own hand; but the ring round his neck will contradict that, and so fix

the guilt on them. Prance must be made to confess, and we will bolster his evidence as we see occasion."

"'Tis a perilous game, but it must be played out," groaned Oates. "But oh, good lack, how it did shake my soul to hear the people, all Sunday, forming in groups, and wondering at Godfrey's absence! Shaftesbury's men were busy at all the coffee-houses and places of public resort. I heard the reason of his absence reported in a thousand different ways. But the paupists are preparing for the worst, and go about wagering that Godfrey hath committed suicide, being so sad and black-biled to look at. 'Tis marvellous convenient to call murdered men suicides. Eh, Blood?"

"You may some day find it so," replied the colonel, coldly. "For you are no favourite with some who know where to find crafty and strong arms to avenge them."

"Nay, but what *we* did, was in self-defence," said Oates, changing his jesting tone. "It was no fault of ours. Since he knew us, we had no alternative, in self-preservation. You know the proverb?"

"You have not been among the Jesuits for nothing Oates," replied Blood. "But at present we have other business in hand than splitting the fine hairs of casuistry. You must set your former engine at work—your foolish Eve!—but how know

ye but, on comparing notes with her husband, she may not suspect your share in the adventure?"

"I have provided for that," said Titus with a grim smile. "I have upbraided her with not making her husband keep his appointment, pretending that I went at twelve, as we had agreed — but you know we did not arrive till two. I found the poor woman in such a panic that she scarcely could speak, but sat crying all the time—whereby I concluded that distracted Prance has made her his confidante, and that neither suspect the truth. You must employ your alchemist again, Blood, to counterfeit the duke's hand, in a letter to this Prance, telling him to be in readiness to remove the body, aided by certain masks, as before. Let him have a sedan waiting at Somerset House till we arrive, and depend on't all will be done well and quickly."

"'Tis but trying, at all events," said Blood, drily.

"But—Colonel Blood," resumed Oates, with visible hesitation, "we are brothers in danger you know—and concerning that boy!" he added, sinking his voice so that only the most intense hearing could have distinguished what he said —"the truth is, colonel, he knows too much—he must *vanish!*"

"Nonsense, brother wolf!" exclaimed the colonel, sharply. "The poor child is delirious, and when

he recovers we can easily persuade him that all this has been but a wild fever-dream. At every hazard, Master Oates, I will not have him hurt—not even so far as pricking in the little finger goes! He is valuable—even dear to me—and I have blood enough of his already fuming in the nostrils of Heaven."

"Well, well—he is very silent—perhaps he is dead," said Oates, rising and coming towards Mervyn's bed. "Let us see."

Mervyn had presence of mind to sink his head on the pillow, and feign a heavy slumber, as the villain approached. He was then conscious that Oates's gaze was fixed upon him—that he scanned his features with a torch—and he felt by no means sure that the villain would not take the opportunity to cut his throat. He therefore feigned to be disturbed, and Oates withdrew softly on tiptoe.

"How troubled-like he sleeps," he heard him mutter to Blood. "I hope the fever is not contageous—but I do feel mighty sick. Let us have some mulled sack, Blood; 'tis cheerful and—"

He broke off suddenly, for a loud knock was heard in the corridor by which Blood usually made his exits. Both started, and Oates turned deadly pale. "God's mercy! what if it should be old Godfrey's ghost?" exclaimed he, clutching Blood by the belt.

"Off, dastard! keep thy villanous hands from

me," said the colonel, springing up. "'Tis much likelier that Shaftesbury hath played us a shrewd turn! I'll up and reconnoitre; at all events they shall not take me alive, to bait like a bear."

And, seizing his pistols from the chimneypiece, Blood disappeared for a moment down his private staircase. Mervyn awaited the result of this espial, with an emotion of which words are but faint exponents, and, carefully as he strove to conceal it, he could not refrain from giving a glance at the affrighted countenance of Oates. But hope vanished when Blood, re-entering, informed Oates, in a grumbling tone, that it was Claude Duval, half drunk, and with a knapsack of provisions on his shoulder, doubtless on a visit. He then took up a ring of keys, and went out to admit him.

In a few moments Mervyn heard a voice merrily singing the burden of a jolly French hunting-song, and replying to Blood's questions in that manner all the way up. But as they entered Claude ceased.

"What a plaguy gabble the man keeps up!" he exclaimed. "As if Claude Duval were like the honest men of the world, and turned his back on a brother in distress. Why, man, I have brought you some small additions to your larder, and two or three pottles of acqua vite, to keep your nose warm. *Mais vogue la galère!* what manner of a companion have we here?"

"A poor labourer in the vineyard!" replied Oates, with his habitual hypocrisy of tone.

"No mummery, Oates, we are jolly friars well met," said the colonel, eyeing his visiter with a suspicious gaze. "But are you sure, Claude, you come here on no other errand?"

"Nay, I am sure to the contrary," replied Duval, cheerfully. "But 'tis not to ferret you out, old fox, for the Ormonde dogs, as your eye hints. I want to see your nephew, for I have taken a sort of liking for him, and would do him good."

"Indeed! but my nephew is too ill to hold much converse at present," said Blood. "His too high and riotous living hath made the schoolboy sick. He was three sheets in the wind last night, and scarce knows a dog from a ditch to-day."

"Where is he then? What! stretched on that straw?" said Claude, advancing to the bed, and the colonel instantly followed.

There was a lightning rush of thought through Mervyn's brain, profoundly asleep as he pretended to be. He felt an involuntary trust in the kindly nature of the highwayman, and half inclined to spring up and claim his protection from this den of murderers. But the certainty that the colonel and Oates would never accede to such an arrangement, and that in all probability they would extend their principle of self-preservation in his favour, deterred

him. Then the question as to what right he had to confide in a man of Duval's character and pursuits, occurred with heavy force—and that ray of hope also vanished.

The highwayman approached his bed, and after gazing for some moments intently at him, Mervyn heard him heave a deep sigh. "How like he is, with that fair flushed countenance!" he muttered, and taking the boy's hand, he bent anxiously over him. Mervyn felt a hot tear fall on his face, and affecting to start, he roused himself, and gave a vacant stare at Claude. Blood spoke to him, and inquired if he knew the gentleman. He turned his head, muttered some incoherent observation, and feigned to drop asleep again.

Duval returned to the fire, and putting his hamper down, observed that the sight of the poor lad had taken away his appetite, and that, since the colonel had company, he would away to some friends who expected him.

"There is to be a ransacking of some wool-staplers from Manchester, and we meet at the Angel," he added, carelessly. "If I make any thing worth while, colonel, I shall bring some little present to your nephew; though, to deal frankly with you, I think he hath not the honour of such relationship."

"What if he be my son?" said Blood, gloomily.

"He hath not the rascally look," replied Claude,

laughing. "But I would speak a few words with him, if he comes from France—*ma belle, belle France!* Whence is he—know you, Master Oates?—From St. Omer?"

"No, in sooth, though I was there for many a parilous day," replied Oates.

Mervyn felt a strong inclination to give him the lie, but he suppressed it, and listened to what followed with the curiosity naturally excited by this conjecture. Claude, however, stood for some minutes musing, and then observing that he must be at Islington within the hour, took his hat to go.

"And pray, sir, since you are from the city," said Oates, clearing his throat with an effort, "pray sir, has any news been heard of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey?"

"Oh, yes, he is found," said Claude, eagerly, and both gentlemen started.

"Where, where?" gasped Oates.

"Why, the cunning old fellow has married a lady of great fortune, and gone off with her. The Duke of Norfolk hurried post to court, and told it publicly to the king, for there were pratings that Godfrey was last seen near his grace's house, in the Strand," replied Claude.

"Is it possible!—he-he-he!—married a bride! Is she young and handsome?" ejaculated Oates, giggling, and winking at Blood.

"Why, sir, do you doubt my word?" said Claude, sharply. "But I know full well what your faction hopes—that it will turn out a murder, and so they may have a pretext to stir up the populace to a general catholic massacre."

"Well, well, sir, I dispute not the duke's intelligence," said Oates, chucklingly; "it would ill become me, that have been one of his chaplains in ordinary;—but it will be seen what will be seen."

"Well, well, I leave you in godly company, colonel," said Claude, going; but he again turned, and added, "I had to tell thee too, Blood, that I have altered my resolution about that plot of yours; I'll have nothing to do in it. The heath, a swift horse, and pistols for me! Claude Duval can use the sword but not the knife. Fie! 'tis an old man with gray hairs, and I'll nought with him."

"As you will, sir," replied the colonel. "But remember you throw away the most splendid prize that ever was offered to mortal thief."

"I am no thief, sir—I am a robber!" said Claude, haughtily. "But farewell; you follow your trade, and I mine. I will come again to-morrow, and see your nephew."

Blood smiled bitterly, and cautiously shading the lamp, lighted Claude down the staircase. As he went out he glanced at the bed, and Mervyn's eye met his with an expression which obviously startled him. He made a hesitating movement back, but

Mervyn closed his eyes, and Blood calling from the foot of the stairs obliged him to follow.

The colonel returned almost instantly, and put down his keys with a grin of satisfaction. "Claude thinks to pump my nephew, as he calls him," he observed, in answer to some mutter of Oates. "But by Jove, if ever they meet again, it shall be under correction of my bludgeon."

"Good loard! how I shook in my shoes all the time he was here!" said Oates, "a word might disclose all; ruin every thing."

"Well, we must see about our tasks; I must go to the Heaven for ink and a crowquill, and find Elkanah," said the colonel. "But tarry—you have them hanging at your girdle, like a scholar as you are."

"Ay, ay, but will it be safe to leave this crafty young kid here by himself?" said Oates. "Who knows but what he may be playing us a false game?"

"Oh, I'll lock him up so that a fly can't escape," replied Blood. "And if he did escape, it were only out of the fryingpan into the fire."

This last intimation that he was to be left alone in the house, made Mervyn's heart palpitate, for he was determined, though it cost him his life, to escape from the clutches of these wretches.

The colonel and his guest continued in close conference for a length of time which seemed intolerable to Mervyn; but at last they came to an end, and as it

was almost night, began to cloak and mask for the adventure, and at last departed.

Fearful, nevertheless, of an abrupt return, Mervyn lay for a considerable time without moving. Hearing no sound, however, but the sinking of the burning wood, he ventured at last to lift himself up and listen. The profound silence of all around appalled him. The room was dark excepting the red gleam of the embers, and such a mass of dreadful recollections came upon him when he saw the spot on which Godfrey had sat, that for some time his brain whirled about in eddies. This cleared away, and it seemed to him as if he heard a voice, he knew not whence, exhorting him to fly and bring the murderers to justice. He arose staggering, for he was almost too weak to stand, and after a fervent ejaculation to Heaven, looked around for his clothes. But Blood had removed them altogether. The Painted Chamber, as we have said, was lighted only by the uncertain flashes of a wood fire, and the ruddy twilight which it made allowed ample scope for the wild sketches of fancy. Strange and gloomy thoughts crowded on his memory. The dark legends of this accursed mansion arose to his recollection, clothed in a bodily and dramatic form. The terrific punishment of the parricide, even in his children's blood, occurred to him with indescribable horror. A supernatural judgment seemed present, and the vengeance of Heaven itself appeared to haunt the ruins of the

detestable mansion. Mervyn felt as if by staying in it he must share its blasting dispensation, and he rose on his shaking limbs, and without clothes, money, and friends in the vast world, he swore solemnly rather to die than to remain in that house. Even as he took this oath he perceived a corner of the mantle he had worn at Godfrey's hanging from a rent in the tapestry, and searching it he found all his garments of the previous day.

Mervyn debated a few minutes as to the means of accomplishing his enterprise, and finally determined on what was indeed the only chance—to attempt an escape from the balcony. His horror at the thought of entering that dreadful chamber nearly choked this resolution, but he was desperate, and resolved to vanquish his repugnance. He strode resolutely to the door into the corridor, and after listening a moment, and taking a survey of the gloomy galleries around, ventured to set his foot on the stairs. A superstitious feeling again overpowered him, and he stood for some minutes gazing, without the courage to ascend the ruinous flight, down which streamed a dull and melancholy moonlight. At last rallying with a strong effort, he ran up stairs, and leaped breathlessly into the loft. He groped his way to the trap-door, and found it only by the vacancy, for the room below was black as night.

It was with an indescribable thrill of horror that Mervyn found himself once more alone in this dread-

ful chamber. He dared not even glance at the bed, for a horrible fancy haunted him, that two lean old men—both black in the face—were watching his every movement. He paused on reaching the floor, and listened intently; there was a sepulchral silence; but suddenly he thought he heard a deep sigh, or rather groan. His hair actually bristled on his head, and, for some moments, he stood immovable. But listening on, the hollow sweep of the wind, which was very high, reassured him, and he hastily concluded that the sound he had heard was from the same cause. He made a movement towards the door, which he now perceived was fastened with a padlock; but another deep groan—no longer to be confounded by possibility with the wind—smote his ear. Driven to the verge of madness, and utterly desperate, he turned towards the bed, and, with cracking eyeballs, saw that the mouldering quilt stirred! Horror would, doubtless, have utterly overthrown his reason, had he not, at the same dreadful moment, caught sight of a countenance glaring at him, and heard a hollow laugh that was familiar to him. A moment's flash of vision and thought convinced him it was Blood, concealed in the miser's bed, and that he had taken this cunning means of discovering whether his insensibility was real or feigned.

"So, my young master, all's right, you see; only

it's a dead failure," exclaimed the colonel, rising in his couch, and laughing heartily.

Mervyn took his resolution instantly, and with extraordinary dexterity in one so young, he affected not to perceive Blood, nor to notice his laughter, but set his lamp deliberately on the floor, and kneeling before a massive cabinet in the chamber, he began wafting his light, as if it were a censer before the altar. He then sung a Latin vesper-hymn, in a sweet calm voice, as when an acolyte at St. Omer he was wont to chant in the choir, and was the admiration of all for his excellent melody. As he sang, Blood gazed with long and intense surprise, and getting softly out of bed, moved on tiptoe towards him. Mervyn heard him mutter, "The poor child is delirious;" and he burst into tears.

Blood called him softly by name, and Mervyn, affecting to start, exclaimed, "Yes, father!—but indeed I cannot sing better."

"Father!" muttered the colonel, and assuming a voice which he thought might suit a brother at St. Omer, whither he imagined the boy's delirious fancy had wandered, "My son," he said; "I do not wish you to sing better; you sing like an angel —but go to bed again. Alas, poor child! how hot his skin is!"

Afraid that he might overact his part, Mervyn

suffered himself to be led passively back to his bed in the Painted Chamber, and the colonel sat down beside him. He continued singing little snatches of sacred melodies for some time, and not without effect; for, glancing once at Blood, he perceived that his eyes were full of tears! It might be that milder associations of early youth and innocence came over his rugged heart, and touched it, seared as it was by so many years of bloodshed and violence. At last the youth feigned to drop asleep, hoping or conscious that his watcher would be obliged to depart on his dire task. And so it happened—a distant bell struck nine, and seemed to summon him. He arose, wrapped Mervyn up with a mother's care, and as if apprehensive that he might be afraid if he awoke in the dark, trimmed a lamp and set it on the table. He even put some cooling drink within reach, and after putting fuel on the fire, departed.

CHAPTER XI.

ALGERNON SYDNEY AND HIS DAUGHTER.

This time Mervyn listened to the retreating steps of his custodian with intense anxiety. He heard the doors slam after him, and the bolts drawn; but so great was his dread that he continued to listen till St. Paul's struck ten. He then ventured to get up, and desperate with the circumstances which hemmed him in, no longer paused or hesitated. In a moment he was in the Haunted Chamber—but he gazed fearlessly around, sprang to the door, and attempted to open it—in vain. A moment's inspection showed him that Blood had secured it by a padlock, the key of which he had taken with him.

Mervyn was discouraged but not subdued. He

attempted the windows, and finding that they would not open, and if open, were secured by cross-bars outside, he tried to force the door with a wooden stake. But in vain did he exhaust his youthful strength in the attempt; the fastenings, contrived by a miser, were impenetrable.

At last, overcome with fatigue and disappointment, he sat down to rest, and began reflecting that even if he were on the balcony, it would endanger his life to drop into the river, supposing it at full tide:—yet this was his only hope. Then again the horror of remaining in such a den of murderers, reanimated him. He knew he was a good swimmer, and believed that heaven itself would aid him in so righteous an attempt; and, as if by inspiration, the recollection of the trap-door in the loft occurred to him. Once on the roof, he thought it might be possible to scramble down to the balcony, which was only a story below. Apprehensions of his jailer's return, for it struck twelve o'clock as he listened, contributed to stimulate his exertions, and he made his way again to the loft.

After two or three ineffectual leaps, he managed to swing himself up to the cross-beams, and imitating the means which Blood had taken, thrust himself from beam to beam, until he reached the trap-door in the roof. The bolt was, however,

so firmly in, and fixed by thirty years of rust, that he actually pulled off bolt and staples without being able to undo it. Then rallying all his strength, he forced the door back on its grooves, and with indescribable joy, beheld the starry sky, and the bright moon sailing serenely in its blue depths. Groping himself up, he knew not by what means, he swung out on the roof.

After the first ecstatic feeling of delight, he looked carefully round. He found himself on the projection of the high gabled roof; behind him the sloping roofs and haggard map of Alsatia; before him the river, tossing snowily under a high wind and a bright moonlight. On this side the balcony must needs be, and he crawled on his hands and knees along the gable, to ascertain how far below it might be. To his great surprise and disappointment, he perceived that it was much lower than he had calculated, and that it was impossible to leap the distance without imminent risk of breaking his neck.

The fresh air and the prospect of liberty had, however, wonderfully reanimated him. He resolved to return and get some of the clothing of the miser's bed, and make a rope by which he might let himself down. He was now insensible to all supernatural fears; he ran down with the utmost speed, and tore off the quilt. He had some difficulty in dragging it up after him, but succeeded

at last, and ran to the Painted Chamber for a knife, and laden with these treasures, soon found his way to the roof again.

He now tore three broad strips the whole length of the quilt,—and though it seemed very rotten, by twisting and knotting it at intervals, he thought it would be firm enough to bear his weight. Time past rapidly during this operation, and it was with a throb of the heart that he heard the bells of various churches tolling one o'clock, in a solemn and melancholy murmur over the waters. He began to calculate the probability of his enemies' return, and felt that there was no time to be lost. Without pausing to finish the rope so carefully as he could have wished, he looked around for something to fasten it to, and with extreme vexation perceived that there was nothing. But in the course of the sorrowful survey which terminated in this conviction, his eye chanced on the open trap-door, and he instantly determined to fasten his rope to it. This he accomplished as strongly as he was able, having first tried the hinges of the trap-door, and found them sufficiently firm for the purpose. He then threw the rope over with a log of wood fastened to the end, and crawled to the verge of the gable. On looking down he saw that the log swung at some distance from the floor of the balcony, but calculating that he should easily drop the remainder, he prepared to swing himself over the gable. There was

considerable danger that at the first shock some part of his frail apparatus might give way, and precipitate him on or over the balustrade below; but Mervyn resolved not to calculate those dreadful probabilities. Murmuring a short commendation of his soul to its Giver, he stepped over the projection, grasping his rope, and with a sensation to which no words can do the faintest justice, he found himself dangling in the air over that terrible height.

The presence of mind, skill, and caution which extreme danger excites in brave natures, did not desert our young adventurer at this terrible pass. He let himself softly down from notch to notch, carefully avoiding all occasion for a jerk, for he now perceived that his frail cordage would give way against the sharp edge of the gable, if the strain were directed on any point but the centre. Water poured down his face, and he felt every moment as if inclined to rush upon the worst, to end the agony of mind which he suffered in fearing it. The terror of his position, however, decreased as he continued to descend, and when he found himself about midway he began to feel more tranquil and collected. This emotion in its turn yielded to one of unbounded joy, when at length he felt the log of wood beneath his feet, and for the first time he ventured to look down.

Another difficulty now assailed him. The height which remained was considerably greater than he

had imagined, being nearly twelve feet, but an expedient offered itself to his quick imagination. He suffered himself to glide gradually down till his body hung its full length, holding the log with both hands. But even then he hesitated, for his feet were without defence, and he feared he might fall in such a manner as to break some limb—which would put a stop to his proceedings. An accident saved him the terrible necessity of deciding; the log broke off, and he fell to the balcony, with no further injury than a severe twist of his right ankle, and a bruise from the balustrade.

His heaviest danger was, however, yet to come, and so Mervyn thought as he gazed over the balcony upon the river below. It was full tide, on which all his hopes depended; but the water was rough and driven by a violent breeze; so that on calculating the depth he must fall, his own weakness, and the tide's strength, Mervyn thought it was hardly possible he could reach the opposite shore.

The Surrey shore was not then, as now, a series of vast warehouses, ship-yards, foundries, and docks, where commerce parades her cranes and mighty implements of industry. It was a low flat shore, covered with reeds and willowy pastures, and diversified by a few straggling villages and farm-houses. On the London side, however, the city had extended itself as far as the eye could reach on either hand, and black shadows and strange

beetling lights weltered on the dark waves wherever the moonlight did not shine. Mervyn distinctly perceived the four pinnacles of the Tower on his left; and far to his right, beyond the terraced gardens of the Temple, he recognised the white masses of Somerset House, which seemed brightly illuminated as if for some festival.

Gazing over this scene in a fit of despondency, he saw at a considerable distance down the river a small but very beautiful little barge, such as were used by the citizens for pleasure, at a time when the Thames, like the lagoons of Venice, was the favourite highway of its dwellers. It was visible by several torches, carried by men in livery seated in the barge, and Mervyn thought he could discern a female figure at the boat-head, near a gentleman in some sad-coloured vestments. From the course the boat was taking, Mervyn had little doubt that it would sail midway between Alsatia and Surrey, and that it probably contained a party going to some midnight revelry at Somerset House, where the queen of Charles II. resided. He thought that if he could but summon sufficient strength to reach the barge, compassion would induce the persons in it to receive him on board. His resolution was soon taken, and he continued to watch the little bark as it rapidly bounded on before the tide, with an emotion of the most intense anxiety. Nearer and nearer it came, and he began to pre-

pare for his terrible leap, by clambering up the balustrade and standing on its rotten verge, grasping one of the pillars.

Whilst thus intently watching this uncertain star of hope, as it came glimmering over the waters, the dreary contrast presented by that world in which he had longed to launch as on a sea of love and pleasure, sunk heavily into his heart. An orphan, alone, unloved, unprotected, he stood there in that pass of extreme danger, while, full of mirth, at perfect ease and safety, the revellers of life rowed past! He had not, however, much time to indulge in these sad cogitations, for while he stood hesitating, and the boat came nearer, he heard, or thought he heard, a sound of unbarring in the miser's apartment behind. Listening with his hair on end, he distinctly heard Blood's tremendous voice, and then Oates's whine! Light flashed through the barred windows—his jailers had returned from their horrible work! Still he hesitated—every muscle stiffened with fear. Repeated blows were given at the door of the balcony, as if the person who knocked were too impatient to wait to unlock it. At the same instant Mervyn heard a shout from above, and glancing up, he saw the diabolical face of Oates louring at him from the gable-end, his right hand levelling a pistol at his head. With a wild shriek on heaven for aid, he leapt—and the report of the pistol, accompanied

by a shout of triumph from the wretch who fired it, were simultaneous.

The shot, however, whizzed over his head, and in an instant Mervyn dashed with extreme violence into the waves, sunk to their oozy depths, and rose again with a supernatural effort. The cold waters seemed to strike a pleasant chill into his burning frame, and his strength returned wonderfully, and seemed to surpass that of a young steed. Torches gleamed from the balcony above, yells rung in his ear, and conscious of the danger he ran if observed, he dived deep in the waves, and only rose beyond the circle of light. His streaming gaze instantly discerned the barge advancing, but still at a considerable distance, and he strained towards it with every nerve and every muscle. He soon found, however, that his strength deserted him in the endeavour to combat that of the tide, and he was obliged to confine his efforts to keeping as much as possible in the line of the barge, and to uttering faint cries for help.

The boat was now approaching very fast, driven by the rapid wave and strong wind, and Mervyn's powers were so exhausted that he could merely float like a log of wood. On a sudden it seemed as if his last hope were leaving him; the barge shifted her course, and seemed to make for the Surrey shore. Rallying his energies to one last desperate effort, he shouted "Help! I am drowning," and instantly it

seemed as if the female face turned towards him, and in that excess of horror it appeared to him like that of an angel of mercy. He uttered another cry, and strove to breast the rushing waves with the last efforts of his exhaustion. At this instant the bargemen threw the blaze of their torches towards him, the female shrieked, and a manly voice shouted to him to keep up, that help was near. The barge turned suddenly towards him, and Mervyn felt all his energies revive within him. He buffeted the waves furiously back, neared the barge, and then of a sudden all his powers finally deserted him. It seemed to him, however, as if, when he was sinking amidst the rush and roar of the waves, the white hand of the angelic voyager grasped his—that something clutched his hair—and then sight, feeling, memory vanished, and he knew no more.

How long this state of insensibility lasted, and what occurred in it, Mervyn was totally ignorant; but his first recollection on reviving was that he lay for a considerable time in a kind of revery, without uttering a word, and merely gazing at the rich hangings of a bed on which he was stretched. By degrees his memory brightened up, but at first the dreadful particulars of the scenes he had lately gone through occurred to him indistinctly, as if in a dream. At last a clearer train of thought flowed through his perturbed brain, and he raised himself in the bed to ascertain where he was, for he could

not reconcile his recollections of the colonel's accommodations with those he now enjoyed. He found himself in a very handsome room, hung with damask silk, and richly furnished. An old woman was sitting by his bedside, nodding over an open missal, and there was a snug fire burning in a grate before her. Mervyn was satisfied with this, he knew not why, and he lay down, and after amusing himself for some time in vacantly watching the old woman's periodical nods of the head, a new train of recollections rushed upon him. The particulars of his escape, to the moment when he sunk insensible into the waves, passed in vivid masses; and, unable to comprehend where he was, he took the liberty of disturbing the old woman's slumber. She woke with a start which sent her spectacles from a long hooked nose, and rubbing her eyes and uttering a thousand lackadaisies, she began wrapping the bedclothes, which he had deranged, as compactly round him as if on an Egyptian mummy.

"Bless your sweet eyes, child, for the sake of him you favour like two cherrystones," she said, coaxingly. "And do go to sleep, darling, and don'tee speak, for the doctor ordered you not, under peril."

"But where am I, mother? For goodness' sake, tell me where I am, and who you are?" said Mervyn, faintly.

"Why, chuck, I am Mistress Sydney's nurse," replied the old woman, "my name is Alice Penryn,

and I never served but in two places all my life, for as old as I am; which is a certificate few servants can take with them. The first time it was to the noble Aumerles—Alack-a-day! I was nurse to the poor young earl that killed himself in the Tower, and I warrant me, treated more like his mother than his servant. Then I had the nursing of his poor little—"

"But, mother, tell me where I am, and how I came here?" interrupted Mervyn.

"Nay, for the how, that's just what none of us can make out," said Alice. "But for the where—you are in Aumerle House, my Lord Howard's that is, woe the day!"

"Good Heaven! Lord Howard's! But how came I here?" said the bewildered patient.

"Nay, good sooth, were you not picked up two nights agone by the honourable Colonel Sydney, as he brought Mistress Aurora from the ball at Somerset House?" said the nurse. "But, poor soul! you became insensible as any stone when they lifted you out of the water, and Heaven knows it was nothing but superior goodness that kept you from drowning."

"And does the Lady Howard know—has she seen me? Did she not remember to have seen me before?" exclaimed Mervyn.

"Ay, faith, did she, and was so shocked at the sight, she clean perished away," replied the nurse. "But she would not let you be cared for out of the

house, though I am sure, I wonder she dared look at you, child, you are so like—well, well, no matter."

"But who—who was that—what lady was that in the boat?" said Mervyn, his pallid face flushing with anxiety.

"Mercy! and who but dear, sweet, good Madam Aurora?" said the old woman, enthusiastically. "But I ought not to talk to you, darling, so go to sleep, or the doctor will be angry. To be sure it was Mistress Sydney, and she told me she stretched out her hand to save you, and you grasped it, and you would both have gone down, only her father clutched you by the hair and drew her back."

"God for ever bless her!" exclaimed Mervyn, melting into tears; but darker recollections crowded upon him, and looking wildly at the nurse, he said, "But—but is Godfrey's body found?"

"Lord love us! he is raving again," groaned Alice. "I knew how it would be; Doctor Brooke told me not to talk with him on any account. Why, child, you have done nothing these two days but rave about Godfrey's murder; and poor, dear precious man, he is found now sure enough. And folks say—more shame to 'em—murdered by us poor wretched catholics that dare hardly call our heads our own."

"Where was he found?" gasped Mervyn.

"In a ditch in St. Pancras fields, a good two miles from town," said Alice; "his silver-hilted

sword stuck to the belt through him, his neck broken, and all his guineas about him; so that it could not have been thieves that did it, though Claude Duval robbed the Earl of Harrington only the other day, in Piccadilly, by broad daylight."

"Could I see Colonel Sydney—for an instant?—my life depends on it!" said Mervyn, clasping his hands in eager supplication.

"By and by he'll come and see you," replied the nurse, composedly. "He is just going to dine.—There is a great feast given by my Lady Howard, and all the quality are there—the Duke of Monmouth, my Lord Shaftesbury, the Lord Russel and his lady, the——"

"Oh, as you have a soul to save, tell him to come to me—this moment, this very moment!" ejaculated the youth, passionately. "There is murder—death—treason—I know not what! I cannot, I will not die with this load of horror on my soul!"

"Hush, for goodness sake, darling, or they'll say I've done it," said Alice. "And you know it was you made me talk—but good lack, here is Lady Aurora!"

The sweet, low, musical voice of a young girl was heard at that moment; the door half opened, and a form, which to Mervyn appeared that of an angel of light, glided softly in. It was a fair and very elegant girl, apparently very young; but her voice had

the musical tenderness of intonation, and her form the delicate rounding and symmetry which mark the period when the aerial graces of childhood vanish in the riper and richer beauty of womanhood. Her features were almost purely Grecian; her complexion was very fair, the cheeks and lips richly tinted, and a profusion of dark auburn hair fell in ringlets, as the fashion then was, round her fair face and neck. She might have sat to a painter without any alteration, as the celestial Hebe, so fresh, gay, and full of rich and jocund life did she seem. There was a merriment too in her laughing eyes, a rosy sparkle in her smile, which seemed to characterize one of a vivacious and warm-hearted nature, and a nobility of expression in the repose of her perfect features. She was dressed very simply—in white, with a bunch of moss-roses in her bosom, and a circlet of opening buds intwined among her rich tresses.

"Well, nurse, how is he?—how is your patient?" was the question of the fair creature as she tripped lightly in, almost to the bed.

"Hush! he is in his senses again!" exclaimed Alice, as Mervyn raised himself suddenly on his pillow.

"I am better—well—blessed lady!" exclaimed Mervyn, regardless of every thing but the dreadful thought which urged him on. "But if you would complete your work, if you would save my soul

from perdition, implore of Colonel Sydney but one moment, but one single moment, to hear what I would say to him!"

Mistress Sydney blushed a lively carnation, and looked in mute surprise at the nurse.

"Alack-a-daisy! he is raving again about Godfrey's murder," sighed the good old woman. "You need not call the colonel, honeykin; he can do no good."

"I swear to you, lady, I am in my perfect senses!" exclaimed Mervyn with startling vehemence. "But I have that upon my heart which will burst it if I may not give it utterance! I must be heard—I will be heard!"

"Ring for a valet, nurse—my father would marvel that I—but who knows? Perchance the poor youth hath something heavy on his mind?" said Mistress Sydney with some confusion. "Beseech you, sir, rest—my father shall visit you." And she disappeared, like a beam of light, from the gaze of the young sufferer.

Content with this promise, Mervyn suffered his aching head to sink on the pillow, and either slept or swooned away for some little time. He awoke or revived with a strong scent of violets in his nostrils, and opening his languid eyes, the first object they encountered was the darkly beautiful face of Lady Howard, who was administering restoratives, and bending over him, with her keen

eyes fixed full on his. There was something in the expression of those eyes which sent an involuntary shudder through Mervyn's very marrow, and he raised himself with a faint ejaculation in the bed. Old Alice was standing beside the lady with a tray of cordials, her mouth puckered in, and her whole frame knit up with an expression of as much dislike as she dared show.

But Mervyn's eye was instantly caught by a figure on the opposite side of the bed. It was that of a gentleman, apparently past the meridian of life; tall, and nobly formed; his features large, dignified, and expressive,—the brows somewhat sternly curved, but the mouth and high-expanded forehead were remarkable for the intellectual mildness of their expression. The whole cast of his countenance was somewhat melancholy, even the glance of his deep blue, penetrating eyes. Contrary to the fashion of the day, he wore his own hair, which was still a dark unsilvered chestnut colour. It was parted high on his forehead, and fell in heavy curls on his shoulders, in the Raffaelesque style, which Milton and other Italian travellers of the day affected. There was nothing, however, of coxcombry in his appearance. His dress, though of rich materials, was of dark colours, without any of the fripperies of the time. It was principally of black velvet slashed with silver, and he wore a cravat and ruffled shirt of the finest lawn, as if in

contempt of the effeminate court fashion of wearing lace collars of elaborate work. A silver sword and half-cloak of ash-gray velvet, with a hat plainly buckled, completed the garb of a man, who, deist and republican as he might be, was undoubtedly one of the noblest specimens of the English gentleman that ever called the illustrious soil of England —mother.

Mervyn felt instinctively that this personage must be Colonel Sydney, and his agitation was excessive. He attempted to speak, but failed, and could only grasp the hand which was extended to him, and bathe it in convulsive tears. Sydney addressed some soothing words to him, entreating him to be calm, and the Lady Howard seconded his efforts with her blandishing voice and expostulations.

"Be not alarmed, good youth," she said, caressingly. "You are out of all danger, and in noble keeping. But Colonel Sydney understands you have some distressing thought on your mind, which you would fain reveal. What is it, my good child?"

And again she fixed those large, inquiring, beautiful, yet dreadful eyes upon him.

"Colonel Sydney, in the name of the common judge of all mankind, if justice, if human feelings still have existence on earth—cause Blood and the devil, Oates, to be arrested—instantly!" exclaimed Mervyn, wildly. "They are murderers! they have

murdered Godfrey! I will prove it—may lightnings slay me else, even as I speak!"

"Be calm, young man," said Sydney, glancing at Lady Howard compassionately, but she had turned her face away. "Be calm! 'tis plain that your excited fancy, as oft indeed haps, hath taken the shadows and hues of passing events, and distorts them into fantastic horrors. If these dreadful events of latter days exercise such disturbing influence on sane and sober minds, what must they on a wild and troubled imagination like thine?"

"I tell you, Colonel Sydney, if there be truth in heaven or earth, I speak it!" exclaimed the youth, with desperate vivacity. "Monmouth, Shaftesbury, Essex—ay, lady, the Lord Howard himself, though meaning it not—caused this dreadful deed—Blood and Oates are but the executioners!"

"I have explained to you, Colonel Sydney, why I take no offence from these wild ravings of a diseased fancy," said the countess, in a low agitated tone.

"Certainly, my lady, it were unreasonable," said Sydney, significantly.

"Oh, surely, surely, Lady Howard, you will bear witness that I came to your house in company with Blood—that I was introduced to you by him"—began Mervyn, when the lady hastily interrupted him.

"Mr. Blud?" she said, with remarkable shortness of pronunciation. "Mr. Blud, I do indeed recol-

lect, came here with a message from my Lord Shaftesbury—and methinks he did introduce to me some youth of your inches—but 'tis some time since. And yet—now I recollect—alack, poor child, he spoke to me of some infirmity, in your else excellent sense, which at times made you mad; but the fit soon past—prithee be calm."

"And, perchance, in some access of thy disorder, thou didst leap from one of the bridges into the river?" said Sydney, sternly. "Madness alone can excuse such an act; for know, child, that even the noble Greeks and Romans did ever esteem that man dishonoured who basely threw away a life which his country might still need."

"I threw away no life! I perilled my life to save my life!" said Mervyn, bewildered by the new intricacies of his position. "I fled from a den of murderers. Colonel Sydney, I do not ask of you to believe one word which I shall not substantiate by facts. Get me a warrant and a few soldiers, and if I lead you not to the very house—'tis in Alsatia—where they trapped and murdered Godfrey—let me be branded with the mark of Cain, and torn to pieces by wild horses!"

"Can it be that this madness is feigned—that this youth is in the villanous service of the court, to counteract the recent horrible discovery?" said Lady Howard, answering the surprised look of

Sydney. "My poor child, if you are engaged in any such complot, I do beseech you desist, for it will but redound to your own shame and punishment."

"The king and his minions are doubtless wicked enough to form such a contrivance, but I cannot believe this fair boy to be of the plot; he may be deceived," observed Sydney, coldly. "Do but feel his pulse, my Lady Howard, how it leaps!—'tis delirium, and his whole frame is on fire. Endeavour to banish these dreadful imaginations, youth, and rest will restore your clearer reason."

"You will not then believe me? You will not aid me to hunt out these murderers?" gasped Mervyn, almost choked with emotion.

"It is impossible—you are only raving, boy," said Lady Howard, rising. "We will see you anon, when you are calmer. Come, colonel, the company are waiting us."

"Then on your heads be all the blood which shall be shed by the axe of public assassination!" shouted the youth with all his remaining strength. "Oh, Colonel Sydney, men call you just—and will you suffer Englishmen to be murdered in the name of justice?"

"Nay, I would die sooner than one hair of an English head should be plucked unjustly," said Sydney, with his grand smile. "But you are not

now capable of rational discourse. I will revisit you when I have dined, and hope to find these wild phantasmata of a sick brain sobered down."

"Tell Lord Shaftesbury from me, that he is an atrocious conspirator," exclaimed the youth, excited to madness by the disbelief of his direful tale. "But I will have no more blood upon my head. I will not stay dozing in bed while honest men have their lives sworn away by hellish murderers. I will out —out as I am, and proclaim it everywhere!"

He made a strong, almost spasmodic effort to rise in his bed, grasping the rich quilt as if to use it as a covering, but Lady Howard, uttering a faint shriek, caught him by the shirt-sleeve. His sight seemed then to spin round, his brain swelled as if to burst the skull, and he sank insensible on his pillow.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REIGN OF FANATICISM.

This pause on the rack of mental agony was destined to have an abrupt termination. Several hours seemed to have elapsed, for when Mervyn awoke suddenly, it was night, but the room was full of torches. The voice of Sydney was heard in loud expostulation, the old nurse was wailing and wringing her hands, and a moment's glance showed Mervyn that his room was full of musketeers. Then he heard another voice—the abominable voice of Oates! Its sounds seemed to fill him with indescribable loathing and hatred, and he sprung up, shouting "Secure the murderer!" till the room rang again.

"Oy, oy, gentlemen, secure him! that is the villanous tool of the paupishers!" shouted Oates, turn-

ing with a visage inflamed with fiendish rage. "Secure him—you have his maujesty's warrant and mine."

"But he is not in a condition to be removed, Mr. Oates," said Colonel Sydney, very vehemently. "The physician declares his life in danger, and it will be at the peril of yours if you attempt to remove him."

"Indubitably, Colonel Sydney, honoured sir," replied Oates. "If he dies on the way to Newgate, so much the better for him; he will thereby escape the gallows. But I own, Colonel Sydney, I am surprised to see so excellent a true-blue protestant and abhorrer of arbitrary power, support the cause of a young paupish villain and espial, hired to overthrow the true protestant religion, and stoifle the discovery of the execrable, abominable ploat which—"

The worthy gentleman had proceeded thus far in his harangue when his progress was stopped by a sudden tightening in the throat. Mervyn had leaped out of bed, sprung at his throat, and holding it with the strenuous grasp of madness, he shrieked, "Seize him, seize him!" with all his force. Oates yelled murder, and attempted in vain to shake his hold loose, till one of the soldiers rushed in, seized Mervyn, tore him off with great violence, and handcuffed him. Even when secured, Oates attempted to strike his young victim; but Sydney

clutched his arm back, and protested he would not allow the boy to be ill-used, whatever was his offence.

"Will you resist the king's warrant, Mr. Sydney?" vociferated Oates.

"Let me see it, and I will answer you," replied the colonel, with calm dignity. "You have made an illegal arrest, Mr. Oates, for you have not shown the prisoner your warrant."

"It is here," said Oates, rudely thrusting a parchment into the colonel's hand, who read it deliberately aloud, and found that it was a warrant in due form, authorizing the bearer to seize, apprehend, detain, and bring before the worshipful Alderman Bethel, or any other of his majesty's justices of the peace, the person of one Ichabod Mervyn, Jesuit novice of St. Omer."

"Well, colonel, do you surrender the body of this criminal quietly at the command of your king and mine?" said Oates, with a malicious sneer.

"I surrender this accused person, but no criminal," replied Sydney. "A jury of his country, and not your too ready lips, must pronounce him such, if such he be; but you arrest him at the peril of doing murder."

"The worst mischief will be cheating the hangman of his fee," replied Oates; "so officers, dress your prisoner—by force, if he resist."

"If I am to go before a magistrate I will go willingly, gentlemen," said Mervyn. "I do but ask a patient hearing to the horrors I have to reveal."

"I promise you, my young master, you shall go before a magistrate, ay, and a judge and a jury, and then an airing to Tyburn," said Oates, ferociously.

"Methinks for a man of your holy garb you demean yourself more like a fiend than a Christian, Master Oates," said Sydney, slackening the rope which Oates was fastening very tight round the youth's wrists. "This binding and fettering one of the king's subjects, unless he resist, is against the law, and I will not suffer it!"

"Every body knows, Master Colonel, it is not by your good pleasure that his maujesty has any subjects at all," sneered Oates. "And as for your religion, there's not a 'prentice that knows trap from ball but knows you are given to the atheistic, deistic, pantheistic adoration of Greek and Roman gods, and—"

"By Heaven! I could almost find it in my heart to dishonour this sword in thy mean, dishonest blood!" shouted Sydney, turning pale with anger, and touching his hilt.

"Bear me witness, gentlemen, the colonel obstructs the king's warrant," said Oates, in his screech-owl tones.

"Trouble not yourself with this wretch, noble sir," interposed Mervyn, quivering all over with rage and feverish excitement; "let him but take me

before a magistrate, and if I prove him not so black a fiend that hell will scruple to receive him, let men quote me for a liar until the last day, which shall proclaim my truth in thunder."

Mervyn did not understand what sort of justice is dispensed by fanaticism, but the colonel did; and he shook his head sorrowfully. Nevertheless, Oates looked perturbed, and hurried the proceedings as much as possible. Mervyn was soon dressed in some clothes which Sydney lent him, and the colonel obtained permission, rather from the prudence than the humanity of Oates, that the prisoner should go to the city in his coach. Something supernatural seemed to have revived Mervyn's strength. He walked with firmness, thought distinctly, felt no alarm—his course seemed to lie so open and apparent before him. He had not yet learned that it is not enough to speak the truth, to be believed.

In a short time the procession was marshalled, and the unconscious heir of Aumerle was led down the gilded staircase of his own magnificent mansion in the custody of thief-takers, as a traitor and a felon.

By this time a mob had gathered round the house, and understanding that their beloved Doctor had captured one of Godfrey's murderers, greeted their appearance with yells, hootings, and hisses, mingled with vehement applause for Oates. Sydney, who had determined to accompany the pri-

soner, directed the coachman to drive fast, and they were soon out of hearing of the clamorous mob. The report, however, spread far and near, and when Oates triumphantly escorted his prisoner into Guildhall, the court was already crowded to suffocation.

Mervyn stood for some moments at the bar before he formed a clear notion of the scene in which he found himself principal actor, so confused and stunned were his intellects. The sight of Colonel Sydney by his side somewhat encouraged him, and, amidst the buzz and uproar of the scrambling mob, he looked curiously around, as if he had no more interest in the scene than a common spectator. He now perceived that he was in a sort of sheepfold, in the middle of a lofty hall, and before him, on an elevated chair, sat a stout bloated man, with a round fat face, small, twinkling, vindictive eyes, and a pair of large hands tightly clasped on a projecting stomach of aldermanic dimensions. He wore the scarlet robe and gold chain of his office, and sat in magisterial solemnity, and with that look of importance which weak men never fail to wear when thrust into a part beyond their management. This was Mr. Sheriff Bethel, as he was called to the last day of his life, from his exploits while in that dignity—a man who, from his determined opposition to the court, was considered a great patriot, and idolized by the populace. Mervyn, however, could

scarcely reconcile his fat well-fed figure with the character for extreme niggardliness, which acquired for the sheriff the immortal dishonour of Dryden's satire.

"Well, doctor—worthy Doctor Oates—so, so, you bring a prisoner—eh? a Jesuit, eh?" said the magistrate, when silence was obtained. "Well, well, nobody can deny but that you are one of the greatest saviours of our nation which the Lord has raised up these many years. May He keep you in health and strength, Mr. Oates, to work out the work, and save us from the execrable popish plot, and all our precious lives and liberties. Well, sir, what is there against this young villain? He hath a rare hang-dog look—is he too in the plot?"

"Your worship," replied Oates, in a sanctimonious voice, "Heaven knows with what anguish and sorrow I appear against this youth, whereto yet my duty compels me, seeing that holy Abraham did not resist the voice of the Loard when he was commanded to slay Isaac, even Isaac his only son! But, oh! with what heart-rendings—for verily my bowels yearn unto him—am I obliged to accusate him not only of the vilest ingratitude to me, but of being concerned, I fear but too deeply, in the late most shocking, horrible, bloody paupish murder of Sir Edmunbury Godfrey, that excellent magistrate, who, please the Loard, is now among the elect in paradise!"

"Do but hear me—a single word, worshipful judge—I abjure you, if you would not have this roof fall on our heads!" exclaimed Mervyn, clasping his hands wildly.

"Peace, wretch!" said Bethel, sternly. "What you may have to say in your defence shall be heard afterwards; but I trow there is no man in England so arrant an ass as to believe any thing a Jesuit can say or swear, considering the damnable power of absolving from all oaths alleged by your abominable church, and the Antichrist at its head."

"Yea, I do accuse this imp of Satan of being hired by the paupish party—(I would I might say *who*, but they are too high marks for any but God's arrows!)" continued Oates, blackening with passion. "I say again this hideous Jesuit spawn is hired to trump up some wicked and most calumnious charge against me, Titus Oates, to the great stoifling of the ploat, the putting down the Protestant Religion and Reformation, and introducing of arbitrary power and French government, or rather tyranny!"

"Have a care, Mr. Oates!—these are extraordinary accusations, which methinks you will have some difficulty in substantiating," said Colonel Sydney. "Let me suggest a fairer account of this matter to your worship. This poor youth is suffering under a delirium to which he is subject, during which, I

fear, he did leap into the Thames, whence I rescued him atsome little peril. And he was visited by a burning fever, during the paroxysms of which his ravings ran perchance on that engrossing topic of the late horrible discoveries which turn all men's bosoms into charnel-houses of dismal cogitations."

"Ravings!—Oh, would they were!" said Mervyn, "let me but be heard, and I will prove those ravings truths, fixed as firmly as the heavens above us! Secure that monster! He is a murderer! he murdered Sir Edmundbury, either with his own hand or by another's!"

"He seems to rave now at all events, Mr. Sydney," said Bethel, sharply.

"Your worship, he is as sane and sober as I am; 'tis but his factious malice," said Oates, with rabid fierceness. "He is suborned by those who wring gold from the blood and sweat of this doomed nation, to put down our Master's providence in the late discoveries of a vile, execrable, never-to-be-sufficiently-detested ploat of Antichrist."

"I doubt, I doubt, there is some murtherous strong hand in this intrigue, reverend Master Oates," said Bethel, shaking his head with a sinister meaning. "But what particular charge must I commit him on? Though indeed a man may well be chary of doing justice against papists, since the fatal, hor-

rible example we have just seen. Nevertheless," said Bethel, addressing his clerk, " Minshull, make out a mittimus to Newgate."

" But, please your worship, we must first have some tangible legal charge, else your worship is liable to the new Habeas Act, and what not," said the clerk, a slender red-haired man, leaning over a desk before the city worthy.

" Ay, ay, well, well, Mr. Oates, and what is your charge?" said Bethel, gruffly.

" Let me first explain to your worship," said Oates, " that this wretched boy is a robber's foundling, whom the Jesuits of St. Omer were bringing up in the Egyptian darkness of paupish superstition, when I—"

" Ha, St. Omer!" exclaimed a voice in the crowd.

" Who spoke there?" said Oates, turning sharply.

" Blessed Mr. Oates," replied a whining voice, " it was a gallant sinfully caparisoned in gilded trappings of Satan, being crimson barred with gold; but he pushed his way out when you turned to rebuke him."

" Some man-serving slave of the court; some gay licentiate of pleasure," said Oates, coldly. " But as I was a-saying, your worship, when I came to St. Omer I found little Judas here in the house of bondage, and, as I thought, loosened his spiritual chains; yea, brought him to the fold, even as a precious yeanling of salvation. But I have since found to

my cost that he was merely hung upon me as a Jesuitical spy."

"Why, thou most abhorred liar and villain!" exclaimed Mervyn.

"Peace!" shouted Bethel; "if you dare to interrupt the witness, I will have you flogged into a proper respect of the court."

"That by your leave you shall not, Mr. Sheriff," said Sydney. "The law of England nowhere bestows such power on the magistrate, and I will take care you do not exceed the law."

"Why! what is this boy to you, colonel?" said Bethel, with considerable surprise.

"He is human," replied Sydney.

"Why for that matter, I hope we are all human, Colonel Sydney," said Bethel, purpling up. "At least I see not that any of us have beasts' heads, though there may be a club-foot among us, for aught I know! But you hear the people do not like your quibblings and fribblings—and you know your own maxim—*Vox populi, vox Dei!* So if you cannot hold your peace, colonel, you must leave the justice-room."

Sydney being silent, the magistrate proceeded.

"Well, Mr. Oates, go on for the third time."

"An't please your worship," said Oates, with a strained meekness, "as I was saying—seduced by his tears and feigned love for me, I suffered him privily to withdraw from the seminary, and

accompany me to this land of light, if we may call it so, notwithstanding the dark clouds gathering over our heads. And look ye, sirs, directly he lands here, he enters into a correspondence with certain high parties who shall be nameless, no doubt at the command of his St. Omer patrons. Your worship, I detected him in the very act, coming from St. James's palace, where Heaven knows no good was to be learned to the protestant religion. Yet again, on his feigned repentance, I forgave him. But again detecting him in the like practices, I discharged him from my sarvice about a fortnight agone, and have since neither seen nor heard of him till I was informed by the maidservant of that poor sacrificed gentleman, (sacrificed for loving us all better than his own poor life!) that it was he who lured Sir Edmundbury forth! And they do say that he was disguised as a page of the duke's—but Heaven forbid I should say by any knowledge of his highness! But Sir Edmundbury was never after seen till we found his precious limbs mangled and bleeding in Pancras Ditch."

"Colonel Sydney," exclaimed Mervyn at this moment, in a voice of such agony that it in a manner compelled audience, "I call down the lightnings direct on my head, if I speak falsely when I say that this man—this monster—brought about Sir Edmundbury Godfrey's murder! Do but hear me,

gentlemen! On my life, on my soul, as we shall all some day meet before the eternal Judge above—" but choked with emotion he broke off and could only point to Oates, gasping, "Murderer!"

This eloquence of nature produced a great and general sensation. Even Oates, with all his impudence, was for a moment appalled; but he soon rallied.

"Oh, thou wolf in lamb's wool!" he exclaimed, "dare you deny that you inveigled Godfrey from his home? ay, that you wore the royal livery? Look, the remnants are on him still! But here is evidence not to be renegated! Dr. Baxter is there, and the woman-servant, Rachel, who admitted him that fatal morn, and, as she shamefully confesses, having her eye pleasantly tickled with his carnal beauty, took so earnest a look at him, that by the same token she recognises him now."

At this point a dismal weeping was heard, and Rachel made her appearance at the bar, clad in a black cloak and hood.

"Do not weep, Mrs. Rachel, your evidence is unnecessary," said Mervyn, resolutely. "I deny none of the circumstances alleged concerning Sir Edmundbury's leaving his house under my guidance, but—"

"Then, oh, prove where you left that godly martyr, and what you have done with yourself since!" shouted Oates.

"Nay, if he admits that point, he admits the murder too, and we shall at last get to the bottom of the plot!" said Bethel, with a speaking glance at the mob, who answered with confused murmurs.

"But surely, and in bare justice, your worship will hear what defence the boy can make?" said Sydney.

"I will not permit the court to be dictated to, Mr. Sydney," said Bethel. "You must either allow business to proceed or quit the court. I am sorry to reprimand a gentleman of your quality, but—"

"Of my quality!" interrupted Sydney. "Your worship mistakes; no man hath any quality in an English court of justice, but guilt or innocence. At least I know it was so under Cromwell, tyrant and usurper as he was, and if under a lawful government, as we all hear it is—but I will say no more, only entreating you, before condemning, to hear the prisoner's defence."

"We must hear the witnesses first, I suppose?" said Bethel, peevishly. "Well, Mr. Baxter: i'faith, we are proud to see as blessed a witness as ever stood on this side martyrdom!"

Baxter appeared as this compliment was uttered, and bowing slightly to the court, turned and looked Mervyn steadfastly in the face. It was not in nature to endure this scrutiny without some emotion, especially in connexion with the horrible charges which Mervyn felt were enveloping him like a

mesh. Oates pointed triumphantly to his wavering complexion, and the venerable puritan sighed heavily. He then delivered his evidence relating to the scene we have described, which was abundantly supported by Rachel's statement. All present gazed with horror at the prisoner, who himself stood amazed at the mass of appearances arrayed against him. Sydney himself was struck.

"Well, Colonel Sydney," said Bethel, exultingly, "what say you now for your client?"

"He is not my client, sir—nay, he is less mine than yours," replied Sydney. "Yet though I do see that there is a charge against the prisoner, I see not that it is proved, though suspicions may certainly be entertained, which perchance he will remove when he is allowed to speak. It is surely just to hear the youth in his explanations. Perchance he may tell us by what chance I found him in the Thames, struggling for life, and seeming to fly from some demoniac enemy."

"That can I," said Oates, eagerly; "for happening to catch sight of him in the horridest company that ever was, I pursued, for my heart bled with pity;—so he ran down the Tower stairs, and being a fine swimmer, and supposing I meant him some great punishment, he takes me to water like a fish, and so no more of him."

"Methought, Mr. Oates, I heard you swear you had not seen him for a fortnight?" said Sydney.

"I meant in a general sense, as being absent from my sarvice," said Oates, somewhat embarrassed. "And besides, it was so dark a night that I could scarcely distinguish his face to say I saw him."

"Pray God there be no malice in this case!" said Sydney.

"I have already warned you, sir, I will not suffer such treatment of the king's witnesses," said Bethel, fiercely. "Nothing but my great respect for your honourable name and character hinders me from committing you for contempt, as I certainly shall this desperate criminal, for aiding and abetting in the murder of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey. But I hope that he will have grace given him to repent, and merit pardon by an open confession of all his villanies, whoever or whatever it may involve." He then made a sign to the clerk, who with great *sang froid* began mending a pen.

"Well then, now hear me—I ask no mercy—nothing but justice!" said Mervyn, in a tone of frantic desperation. "I am innocent, and if I prove not these wretches as certainly guilty of Godfrey's murder as Cain of Abel's, may this roof descend upon us all and crush me alone!"

"A damnable popish argument smelling strongly of the sour leaven of superstition," said Bethel, shaking his head. "It is my duty, young man, to warn you to say nothing which may criminate yourself, for your life is in danger."

"You will not hear me then?—But I will be heard!" said Mervyn, violently agitated. "Good people, hear me! This assassin and hired spy inveigled me from St. Omer under base pretexts, which——"

"We cannot suffer you to use such language, sirrah!" interrupted the magistrate.

"You shall!—I will be heard!" shouted Mervyn. "Yes, he lured me to England, and by his means I was forced to become in some measure an accomplice in the crimes of his faction. I was kept a prisoner by him and his coadjutor, Colonel Blood, in Whitefriars,—where I was a chance witness of the cruel conspiracy of Shaftesbury, Monmouth, Essex, and the Lord Howard, to maltreat a protestant magistrate, and lay the blame on the popish party. They did indeed employ me as their unconscious instrument, to lure the poor old man into their hands, but——"

"Your worship," interrupted Oates, "will you suffer such a farrago of wild nonsense to be heard against such thrice noble men, especially when I assure you that I did never see Colonel Blood once in my whole life."

"Mr. Bethel, let me observe to you, the boy is in a fever, and these are ravings, as can be certified by Dr. Brook," said Sydney.

"I doubt these ravings are firstlings of a new plot to bolster up the old one," said the justice,

shaking his wise head. "At all events, he had better lock up what he has to say for his trial before a jury of his countrymen."

"No no—here, here!" shouted Mervyn, his eyes flashing fire, and shaking like one possessed. "I tell you, judge, I accuse Oates of the murder of that poor old man!"

"Loard have mercy on us all! poor erring wretches imprisoned in a tabernacle of flesh!" ejaculated the doctor. "In charity, your worship, let us account him mad."

"We must not defeat justice because your saintly spirit so meekly forgives," said Bethel. "He seems indeed demented;—but his accusations are prompted by older heads. At present, Mr. Oates, I commit him to Newgate on your affidavit; he may have a doctor there. But I fear me, after all, he will die in his shoes."

"I offer bail to any amount," said Sydney.

"I will take none!" replied the magistrate sharply. A loud hurrah arose from the mob, and Mervyn was obliged to clutch the bar, to hinder himself from falling. He made no further effort to obtain a hearing. Even Sydney seemed astonished and perplexed with what he had heard, and he too left the bar while the warrant was making out, whispering to Mervyn, that he would see him again in Newgate.

Two or three constables now seized and hand-

cuffed Mervyn, and taking him between them, forced a passage out of the hall with their staves, but not without great difficulty. A mob was waiting outside, who received the constables and their prisoner with a tremendous yell. Stones and brickbats flew about them, and it was with the greatest difficulty they could force a way along, when suddenly Oates made his appearance, and the popular rage changed into one universal acclaim of joy and reverence. "Hats off!" resounded on every side, and in an instant not a head was covered. The women crowded round him, the men pressed near for the honour of shaking hands with the great champion of religion.

Oates took the opportunity to entreat the people not to molest the prisoner, assuring them that the laws had him in safe custody, and that important secrets might be expected from him. These remonstrances produced great effect, and the escort was suffered to pass on without much annoyance beyond hisses and yells, until it reached Cheapside.

CHAPTER XIII.

RESCUE OR NO RESCUE!

When the constables, with their prisoner, approached Cheapside, the rush of a new mob compelled them to delay for some minutes, beating about with their staves in vain. A chorus of voices chanting some melancholy psalm was heard, and cries of "Godfrey's body! Godfrey's body!" rang far and near. On hearing this, Oates, who was haranguing the crowd from a high horse-stone, sprang down and pushed into it. The constables, finding the cause of delay, endeavoured to make good their passage before the inflamed masses could arrive. But the pressure was too great, and they were obliged to take refuge with their prisoner on the steps of a butcher's stall, while one of them

battled his way back to procure a stronger posse. At this moment Mervyn felt his sleeve pulled, and a voice which he thought he had heard before whispered in his ear, "Your life is in danger—be on the alert—friends are at hand!"

The prisoner turned, but his unknown friend had vanished in the crowd. He was persuaded, however, that it was Claude Duval, and the consciousness that he possessed even one friend in that vast multitude was indescribably consolatory.

The constables grew more and more alarmed, both for their own and the prisoner's safety, for the mob around showed unequivocal signs of violence, and were pelting them with mud and stones. Luckily the great stream was directed down Cheapside, to meet the body of Godfrey, which was coming from St. Pancras fields to the Guildhall, where it was to wait an inquest. But as it was impossible to force a passage, and their position grew every moment more precarious, one of the constables seized the butcher's cart, which was before his stall, and got into it with the prisoner; Mervyn was seated between two constables, handcuffed and pinioned, while the third beat the horse, and urged it through the crowd.

Meanwhile the multitude fearfully increased both in numbers and ferocity. The mob which accompanied Godfrey's body had met and mingled intelligence as well as strengths, and the news of the cap-

ture of a Jesuit and alleged murderer of the unfortunate magistrate spread far and near. As they entered Newgate-street, Mervyn heard an uproar of marrow-bones and cleavers, the usual signal among the butchers to assemble, and vast numbers of savage-looking men in blue frocks, with bare arms, and wielding the instruments of their sanguinary trade, issued from the purlieus of the market. The shouts and fury of these masses, even the missiles which flew about their heads, seemed not at all to disturb Mervyn: he kept the same tranquillity of despair.

Every window seemed clustering with spectators, every roof was crowded with hanging masses; and thus accompanied by the yells and attacks of the populace, they approached Newgate, the strong walls and spiked summits of which appeared at a little distance. But the space intervening was so blocked up by a mass wedged, shrieking, and struggling together, that it was found impossible to proceed, and the cart stood still while the officers dismounted to force a passage.

Whilst a desperate fight took place around his vehicle, Mervyn's eye was attracted by a spectacle which, horrible as it was, seemed to him a natural phasis of the confused and stormy dream in which he was involved. A vast mob flowed, wave upon wave, down Newgate hill, amidst the most astounding uproar, part engaged in roaring a hymn, while the rest yelled and shrieked in direful chorus. Some

carried torches which they waved like Bacchanals in the air, and by the wild uncertain glare of this light Mervyn saw something indistinctly borne on a bier covered with a sheet, round which the crowd seemed gathering, and rolling like the sea in a whirlpool. Dark countenances, lurid with fatigue and passion, surrounded the corpse, among which Mervyn's eye could not mistake the detestable features of Oates. The wretch was pointing at him as he sat in the cart, and seemed to direct the popular fury upon him, for at the same moment shouts of "A judgment, a judgment! tear him to pieces!" rang on every side, and many of the torch-bearers rushed yelling towards him. Knives, axes, swords, glittered on every hand, and showers of stones assailed the constables, who vainly attempted to protect their prisoner. One of them was struck down by a powerful butcher, and the other sustained a very severe handling; but the third, who still sat with Mervyn in the cart, attempted to lash the horse over whatever stood in the way. The mob, however, seized the reins, and beat the poor animal about the head and breast to force it back. But the horse reared and kicked so violently that at last it twisted the harness off its head, and rushed off at a fearful speed down the hill. The mob gave way on every side, yelling, crushing, and tumbling over each other. The constable who sat by Mervyn leaped out and fell with a heavy crash, head foremost, on the pavement; but

the prisoner was too well secured to make any attempt at escape. The animal continued its mad speed till within a short distance of the bier-carriers, who rushed confusedly out of its way, but its feet got entangled in the loose reins, and it fell down powerlessly on the kerbstone, where it lay bleeding and struggling ineffectually to rise.

Mervyn rose with the intent of leaping out of the cart, to save himself from the kicks of the prostrate horse, when Oates pointed at him, yelling in his horrible tones, "Lo, Goad's judgment! the murtherer! the murtherer!" Instantly the mob rushed round the cart, some clambering up the wheels, some behind, some, in their ardour, scrambling over the panting steed. Mervyn was clutched simultaneously by twenty hands, dragged or rather torn, he knew not how, over the shafts into the street, and amidst uproarious shouts of "No Popery! Tear him to pieces! no Antichrist!" was dragged on to the bier, amidst blows and every species of contumely.

Several of the mob, amongst whom was Oates, bawled out "Bring the murtherer here, and see if the corpse bloods forth!" and this experiment, fortunately for Mervyn, seemed to suit the taste of the ruffians who had seized him. It was then a general belief, which still holds ground in some remote districts, that the corpse of a murdered person would burst forth bleeding on the approach of the murderer.

Severely buffeted, his clothes torn from his back, pale as the ghastly corpse before him, Mervyn was hurried close up to the bier, and Oates clutched him in one hand while with the other he raised the gory sheet. So intense was the curiosity of the multitude to ascertain the result of their philosophical experiment that the uproar suddenly ceased, and a deep, deathly silence swayed the whole mass. Mervyn gazed with an icy shudder at the dreadful spectacle thus forced on his gaze. Sir Edmundbury's corpse lay coiled upon the bier, covered with mud and slime. His flesh was already purpling over with corruption, and seemed as if it had lain for some days in water, it was so swollen and discoloured. There was a deep wound in the breast where his sword was found buried to the hilt, and the body was covered with slashes and bruises. The neck was evidently broken, for the head hung loosely on one side, and the glazed eyes were widely open, the tongue was hanging out, and the flesh was gorged and spotted, and other horrible signs of strangulation were awfully visible.

Mervyn gazed upon this frightful spectacle with no sign of emotion but a choked groan, and unable to articulate a word he looked round, gasping and pointing to Oates. Again the wild yells of fury resounded, torches were brandished, and unnumbered voices called to him to touch the corpse. He obeyed mechanically, extending his hand to that of the in-

animate magistrate, and at the same moment Oates artfully tilted the dead body, so that a few drops of corrupt fluid issued from the nose and wounds.

This was enough. A roar like the sea among breakers resounded in his ear, the mob pressed overwhelmingly upon him, and Oates's yell of "Blood for blood, saith the Loard!" pierced far above the tumult. Mervyn gave himself up for lost. Some rugged hand seized him by the collar of his shirt—all that remained of that garment—and a butcher, crushing his way through the crowd, aimed a blow at his head with a cleaver, which would undoubtedly have split it in two. But a bludgeon suddenly interposed, and simultaneously the butcher reeled back under a dreadful stroke on his own skull. Mervyn instantly recognised in his rescuer—a man in the garb of a waggoner—the powerful form of Colonel Blood.

"No, no, my masters, fair play is a jewel!" said the colonel, laying vigorously about him with his cudgel. "Hang him if you will, but no murder!"

"Have at thee again, though thou wert the devil or Colonel Blood!" yelled the baffled ruffian, returning to the charge with increased violence.

"Nay, thou art not the man to play me at single stick," said the colonel, dexterously parrying the blow, and returning one which laid his opponent senseless on the stones. "Have a care, gentlemen, what ye do! Here comes a king's messenger, to

take the prisoner before his majesty's council! Hands off, or mine are on!"

As he spoke, a horseman, in the uniform of the king's guard, appeared forcing his way through the crowd, and shouting, "Room, room, in the king's name!" He waved a paper over the heads of the mob, who rushed back in masses from the tramp of a powerful horse, which he seemed to ride recklessly through them. He arrived panting and breathless, and, without raising the flaps of a large hat which hung over his face, he shook the paper in Oates's eyes, who still held the youth firmly grasped.

"A secretary's warrant!" he shouted. "Surrender your prisoner, in the king's name, to be led before the council!"

"To be saved by the powers of Antichrist, presiding there!" yelled Oates. "Men of London! will ye suffer it?"

"No popery!—Tear him to pieces!" echoed the crowd, but none dared approach within range of Blood's terrible cudgel, more especially as several athletic figures, armed with the same instrument, had ranged themselves on his side. The messenger also drew his sword, and backing his horse, called to Mervyn to mount behind. But, enraged with the prospect of their victim's escape, the mob now regained courage, and made a rush at him. All Blood's immense strength could not resist the impetus, and he was swept struggling furiously back;

but the cavalier, perceiving the desperation of affairs, stooped from the saddle and tore Mervyn up before him. Then flourishing his sword in glittering circles, he made a furious charge, and shouting, "In the king's name!" plunged forward, and either knocked down or galloped over all who opposed.

For a considerable distance they were pursued by stones, mud, and every species of abuse. But the yells and missiles gradually grew fainter and fewer, and the horse, an animal of great size and power, proceeded at the full stretch of its limbs. They turned rapidly down Fetter-lane, which was perfectly dark and deserted, and galloping down a narrow street near Temple-gardens, past the boundary into Alsatia. Dashing up another narrow lane, bordered by a high dead wall, the horseman suddenly paused at a ruinous gate which seemed to admit into a garden; but the last recollection which Mervyn had was, that his deliverer alighted, and exclaiming, "Now, sir, you are safe!—I am Claude Duval," received him insensible into his arms.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DISCOVERY.

Mervyn's first return of consciousness was a sensation of pricking and cold in the arm, and opening his eyes, he saw that some one held it over a gallipot, and that he was bleeding, but very slowly and tricklingly. He looked earnestly at the person who held him, and saw that he was a thin tall man, with a pale cadaverous countenance, a large hooked nose, small, brown, rat-like eyes, bald, with a long beard, and a projecting underlip, which seemed in a perpetual tremble. He was dressed in a shabby ill-fitting suit of black, with silver buckles and a long red cap, ending in a tarnished gilt tassel. Claude Duval and Blood were sitting on the bed, watching his operations with apparent interest.

"Are we safe?" he murmured, after a faint survey of the apartment.

"Safe as Dover Castle," said the colonel.

"But Oates!—he will find me out, and I shall be torn to pieces!"

"O, ish it a business of Mr. Oates?" observed the practitioner. "Give me de list, Mr. Duval—thank you, shir!—I do not much care to meddle with Mishter Oates—he do quote the Bible so neatly."

"What if the black villain suspects our share in the rescue, and brings the train-bands on us?" said Claude.

"He dare not—I know too much," replied Blood, significantly.

At this point of the conversation, a sweet ease and oblivion seemed to sink on Mervyn, and he knew no more. Fever, accompanied by delirium, kept possession of him for several days, but he knew not how time elapsed, nor what events filled it up. Sometimes he had wandering gleams of consciousness, in which he recollected that Claude Duval and the colonel seemed watching him with eager attention. Even after the rage of the fever had yielded to the Jew's skill, he lay for hours and days immersed in thought, of which he could make no tangible meaning. The first sensible question which he asked was, whether Godfrey's murder was a dream?

Blood refused to answer until he was better able to converse; but observing that this prohibition seemed to make him more restless, he replied briefly that it was all true. A short pause followed, and Mervyn inquired what had become of Claude Duval. The colonel was evidently not much pleased with this query, and he replied shortly that he was engaged on one of his robbing excursions in the north. Mervyn then asked by what means his escape was effected, and on this point the colonel was more diffuse. He said that he and Claude Duval, on learning his arrest by Oates, had determined on a rescue at all hazards; and he added that if Claude's trick of counterfeiting a royal messenger had not succeeded, there was a band of determined fellows in the crowd who were to aid in a forcible rescue.

"And the monster still flourishes, battening in blood?" said Mervyn, with a sigh of exhaustion. "And the murder of Godfrey is still unavenged!"

"And must remain so, unless you would become a parricide!" exclaimed Blood.

"A parricide!" said Mervyn, starting up and sinking back again with a deadly sickness at the heart. "A parricide!"

"Yes, a parricide!" returned Blood, pacing the room with great agitation. "I know you consider me as one of the murderers of Godfrey, though my intentions were only to execute Shaftesbury's plan;—and as such you would bring me to

the gallows. But know, boy, that in so doing, you would hang *your own father!*"

"My father?—Villain, you lie!" exclaimed Mervyn, his pale face kindling and flushing with passion. "I say it is a lie!—you are not my father!"

"Who but a father would have done for you what I have done?" said Blood, pausing abruptly, and looking at Mervyn with a strangely troubled expression. "Have I not hazarded my life to save yours?—spent my last pistole to rescue you, by means of Oates, from the hands of those accursed Jesuits, who were only training you up as a victim to their policy. I placed you under their care indeed—I, a proscribed and miserable wanderer, having no home—hunted by the bloodhounds of the law—placed you, my only child, in their hands. And they taught you—the rogues!—that you were the son of a malefactor hanged for some peasant-braining at St. Omer. Never gaze at me with those unbelieving eyes!—I swear to thee, Mervyn, I am thy father, and as such am prepared to shed the last drop of my blood in thy defence. And now, boy, wilt thou, for a deed which cannot be recalled, inscribe thyself in the hellish list of those who have slain their fathers?"

"Why not?—this is the house where parricides are born and reared till they have strength to slay," groaned Mervyn. "Oh, and are you my father? A murderer! And have I longed my whole life,

prayed, thirsted, dreamed, rushed madly forth into this bad and cruel world—only to learn this? But it is not true, Blood!" he continued with flashing eyes. "You have coined this falsehood to escape the vengeance due to your crime! But think not, think not, to elude me so. Bury me if you will in the centre of the earth—I will rise and proclaim your guilt."

"Four feet of solid earth would keep you snug to the general resurrection, child," said Blood, calmly; "and, but that you are my son, what hinders me from silencing your threats with this dagger? Can you resist? Could I not lately have left you in the hangman's grasp?—were not the mob ready to tear you to pieces when I saved you?"

"But why have you kept yourself so long concealed then?" exclaimed Mervyn.

"Because I could not bear the thought of presenting an outlaw, a man hunted like a wild beast, as your father!" said Blood, in a tone thick with emotion. "But better times are coming. Shaftesbury will soon be in power, and I shall be pardoned—reinstated in my rank! I meant to own you as my son when I could confer the title without fear, and you receive it without shame."

"That can never be," gasped the unhappy youth. "I cannot indeed persist in my resolution to bring either myself or the murderers of Godfrey to the

scaffold—but to own you as my father without shame, horror, detestation, the most bitter anguish —never, never, never!"

"But I will force you to love me, boy," said Blood. "You shall owe much more to me than the life I have preserved. I need something to love me, savage, wild, remorseless as I seem! But think not I will persecute you with my relationship. I mean to close my life in battle against the Turks, or else to turn a monk of La Trappe—ha, ha!"

"And my mother—have I a mother?" said Mervyn.

"A mother!—yes—but she is wedded to another," replied Blood, with visible emotion. "Ay, there indeed I wronged thee, boy! I did betray her innocence, and she my love! Enough!—she is the wife of a man of high rank, and hates thee worse than poison, death, and hell—all of which she has deserved."

A shudder ran through Mervyn's veins, and he turned on his pillow with a low groan, which seemed the farewell sigh of hope. Blood stirred the fire violently, and then wiped the clammy dew which gathered on his huge brows with agitation.

"I have confided my soul's secret to you, Mervyn," he said at last. "And beware how you whisper it even in your prayers. Your mother herself—the she-wolf—longs for nothing so much as to lap her jaws in your blood."

To this revelation Blood added many particulars which stamped an air of probability on the legend. He refused, indeed, most positively to state who the personage was whom he called Mervyn's mother; but from hints which he dropped, coupled with the assurance that it was Lady Howard who had betrayed the youth to Oates, a wild conjecture darted into his mind that it might be her. He could obtain no satisfaction, however, and was left in the dark. The horror and despair of finding such a father furnished him indeed with sufficient food for bitter meditation.

Time past, and Mervyn regained strength; but it was only to find himself a closer prisoner than ever. The colonel's kindness was unremitting, and he left his pretended son alone as little as possible, but still there were many dreary hours of loneliness to be passed. Mervyn heard daily news of the progress of Oates—told to keep him in awe, but which fretted him almost to madness. The sea of popularity ran at high tide for Oates and his patrons. The parliament had opened in a most stormy humour; the ministry wavered; Prance was in Newgate, Coleman condemned; catholic lords and gentlemen and priests were seized daily; a cloud of informers appeared in every direction. Blood seemed now to expect with confidence the advent of a popular administration, and his own immediate pardon on its instauration.

One evening, when they were discussing these matters, the conversation fell upon the Duke of Ormonde, whom the colonel asserted to be the author of all his misfortunes. He was relating his well-known attempt to hang that nobleman at Tyburn, an achievement of which he was very proud, when he was interrupted by a shrill but rather melodious whistle which reached them, as it seemed to Mervyn, from the river.

"Bah! it is Claude Duval," he muttered, after a moment's attention; "why does he come at such dark hours?"

He took a lamp, however, and went to admit him, and Mervyn's heart beat joyfully quick when he distinguished Claude's jovial voice on the stairs. As they ascended he perceived with surprise that there was a third person—a stranger. He was a man of large stature, muffled in a long black roquelaure, and wore a Spanish hat with large flaps, which in great measure concealed his face. But on reaching the landing-place he raised his head, and, the torchlight falling full on his severe and melancholy features, Mervyn started with amazement at the recognition which he thought he made. Claude outstripped the rest, ran to him, and embracing him with eagerness, whispered "for heaven's sake, show no surprise!" and began a loud congratulation on the improvement in his looks.

Meanwhile the stranger and Blood entered, and

the first glance of the former, and his emphatic gesture, seemed to throw Mervyn into a nervous tremour. Claude made haste to prevent these symptoms from being observed; but though Blood politely bade his visiters welcome, he made a sort of involuntary movement to his pistols.

"Colonel Blood, you will excuse me," said Claude, "but knowing that trouble has taught you compassion, I have brought this gentleman, a French ecclesiastic, to take refuge a few hours with you, for it is rumoured that Oates intends to search the queen's lodging, where he resides."

"The gentleman is welcome—your ghostly father as I presume, Claude?" replied the colonel, with a suspicious glance.

"*Morbleu!* (craving your pardon, father!) I came not acquainted with him in so creditable a manner," said Duval. "I chanced to meet his reverence on the Dover road; but, having known him in France, I recognised him in time to spare myself a sacrilege."

"Yes, and did honestly return me scrip and purse, albeit something heavier than the apostle recommended," said the stranger, with a smile. "And now he completes his kindness by saving me from Mr. Oates's perquisitions."

"And you are in England, I presume, on the matter of these late troubles of ours?" said Blood. "I warrant his holiness cannot sleep on them."

"I am in England on my master's errand, to

bring back the sinner and the lost one!" replied the ecclesiastic, with an emphatic glance at Mervyn.

Blood invited the strangers to be seated, and Mervyn tremulously offered his services to remove the priest's roquelaure and hat, which were whitened with snow. But he declined this attention with some asperity, and contented himself with laying aside his large hat. He then took the seat indicated, and began discoursing on indifferent subjects. Mervyn felt nevertheless that his eye dwelt on him almost continually, and though he never dared to meet it, his own emotion grew almost uncontrollable.

Claude very seldom visited the colonel in his den without bringing preservatives against a famine, nor had he on this occasion. He called to Mervyn to help him unload a basket he had brought, which he obeyed with great alacrity, glad of an opportunity to conceal his feelings.

During the repast, the conversation ran on general subjects, but it flowed naturally into politics at last. The French ecclesiastic spoke English well, though with a foreign accent; and he discussed the points mooted, with the fluency of one thoroughly master of his subject. He concluded a vivid description of the perils which menaced catholicism, by observing with a sigh that the church was in less danger from without than within—that there were traitors even in her bosom; and he glanced at Mervyn.

"Nay, he at least is no traitor to the Bishop of

Rome, if that be his liege," said Blood, with a gloomy chuckle.

"I have heard the story," replied the priest; "but methinks falsehood—to give it no worse name—even against so abominable a wretch as Oates, can do no good to the cause of truth."

"I spoke no word that was not true," replied Mervyn, trusting his voice with evident trepidation.

"Nay, sirs, it was but the ravings of fever," said Blood, carelessly.

"But, youth," said the priest, addressing Mervyn for the first time. "I have heard that Oates swore you were his servant, and had betrayed him to the catholic party?"

"He lied—the villain!" said Mervyn with vehemence. "He alone betrayed—betrayed me from the first instant I beheld him!"

"And how, my son?" said the stranger with a look of suppressed but extreme anxiety.

Mervyn glanced at Blood, and, though he observed that his brow was deeply knit, he launched boldly into a narrative of his flight, and a passionate defence of his conduct.

The ecclesiastic listened with profound attention, but his austere countenance betrayed little emotion, and in spite of Blood's evident uneasiness, Mervyn continued his story till he had safely landed himself in England. And then his voice grew troubled, and finally he burst into a passion of tears.

"Enough! weep no more," said the priest in a gentle and moved voice. "There is no sin so great which the church cannot forgive to a sincere repentance! Tell me, child, are you willing to return to to her maternal bosom?"

"Oh, how willing!" replied Mervyn; "but it may not be!"

"It may, it can, it shall be!" replied the stranger, with sudden emotion. "Return, my son, to the arms of the church, which stretches them out to welcome back the prodigal as—as I do!" And Mervyn was instantly locked in his paternal embrace.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed Blood, fiercely clutching the boy's arm. "I am his father! I demand to know."

"His father!—you!" exclaimed Duval.

"Peace, Claude!" interrupted the ecclesiastic. "Colonel Blood, I am here to demand back the orphan whom your arts cajoled from my guardianship. I am the rector of St. Omer. We are two to one, but I am willing to ransom him with gold —I offer you a hundred pistoles."

"I will not play Abraham to an unbelieving generation, sacrificing mine only son," said Blood, bitterly. "And if ye are two to one, I have my backers too." So saying he produced a formidable pair of pistols.

"We are not barkers without teeth either, Master Blood," said Claude, producing a pair with

equal rapidity; but the colonel sunk his with a contemptuous laugh, for Mervyn had rushed between them.

There was a moment's pause, during which the antagonists gazed watchfully and wrathfully at each other, and seemed hesitating what to do. It was broken by a hoarse, familiar voice in the corridor, bawling,

"Hoity, toity! what's a-doing here? Whoy, Master Blood, Master Blood, how's this? Are you turned Norfolk squire, and keep open house to all incomers?"

"It is that devil, Oates!" exclaimed Blood.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ESCAPADE.

As the colonel pronounced the words, the worthy thus announced thrust open the door, and stepped hesitatingly in. Mervyn shrunk back aghast; even Blood glared at him like a wild beast surprised in his den, and Claude stepped before the ecclesiastic as if to conceal him. But the latter would not sanction this manœuvre; he turned Duval gently aside, and confronted Oates, with a sternness and majesty of look and manner which for the moment abashed even his tried impudence. They looked at each other in silence for several moments.

"Loard be marciful to us poor wayfarers!" exclaimed Oates at last. "Here's a pretty kettle of fish! who'ad a thought to meet such worshipful

gentry here? So, so, Mr. Blood, have ya turned priest-hider? Gock! there be more cod to catch than I have net to carry!—But that I should find a popish sarpint in a true-blue protestant hole! I thought only to have found you and the urchin, Colonel Blood!"

"What mean you, villain!" exclaimed the colonel. "Speak quickly and begone! By Heaven, I know not what hinders me from doing the hangman's business on thee!"

"Nay, brother, I mean no harm to *you*—else I had brought my company in at the onset," replied Oates with remarkable coolness. "I only want the kid—do you understand? And since accident has conferred a pleasure which all our diligence could not compass, this reverend gentleman and popish highwayman must honour us with their society. Ay, stare as you will; I say, must! 'Tis a shame you should live longer at your own expense, for the government hath provided lodgings for gents of your degree in Newgate and the Tower."

"You are mad, tribune, you are mad!" said Blood. "See you not you are in my power? Were these gentlemen my bitterest enemies—and they are my very good friends—I would hold them safe though my own life paid the price."

"Pooh, pooh, I run no risk; I know what I am about," replied Oates. "Assist me, and we will share the reward like brothers. A hundred guineas

on Claude, in the Hue and Cry—as much on this young homicide—two hundred moidores offered by parliament on the Jesuit, dead or alive! You know him not, Blood!—'tis the arch-plotter, Van Huysman, chief of that horrible consult held at the White Horse tavern, about killing his most saucred maj——"

"Look ye, dog, vanish!—or thou art on the way to receive thy damnable wages," said Claude, levelling his pistols at the villain's head.

"Peace, Claude, peace!" said Van Huysman, calmly. "Against a single man—or devil, I know not which—we run no danger. Yes, Oates, I am he for whom you take me—Van Huysman! Wretch! and do you tremble before me, who have not feared your God? Serpent that stole into the paradise of innocence! Judas that betrayed with a kiss! Yes, I am he who disappointed the benevolent intention of chance, and saved thee from death in the flesh, only that thou mightst achieve thine own eternal ruin, and that of this loved and unfortunate child!"

During this invective, Oates's eye sunk, he looked confused and irresolute, and kept gnawing his under lip.

"Oy, oy, yes, yes," he replied hurriedly, "you may call me ungrateful, about that presarval too! The Loard reserved me for a great work! he made the stones his instruments; glory, glory! But I'll

be revenged—I will!—The execrable ploat! Remember how you treated me at St. Omer! made me sit at a table by myself as if I had the plague. I'll be revenged. I have a warrant in my pocket to arrest all Jesuits, popish rogues, what not! I'll do't!—it's come about now!"

"As you shall find, Master Oates!" said Claude, vehemently. "We are four to one; and I do feel well inclined to pay off an old score, by signing thee a passport direct to the fiend!"

"Naw, naw, mounseer, y'are only four to forty," said Oates, steadily. "Ya do not think I am fool enough to trust myself in the whale's jaws without a harpoon—like blessed Jonas? The house is surrounded, gentlemen!—a whistle of mine brings in a boat's crew of musketeers who wait below. You are landlocked too; resistance is in vain. I have choked the sentinel's horn with silver, but I come to offer you terms. Blood, hear me," he continued, clutching the colonel's arm, and speaking in a low fiendish whisper. "Lady Howard has offered me four thousand pounds to bring this younker to the gibbet, and you shall finger a cool thousand—eh?"

"Four thousand pounds! good, excellent, unparalleled murderess!" exclaimed Blood. "Four thousand pounds! why the fiend! she only offered me a thousand if I would do it, and with my own hand too! And am I so much a cheaper villain than this toad of the devil's spawning? By hell-fire! I'll have

it all; no one shall touch him but myself! I'll die sooner! look to it, Oates! Make yourself on the instant invisible, or—or—your life is in danger!"

"I can't believe you are such a noodle!—what! virtuous, colonel?—two thousand then!" exclaimed Oates. "Hark! my men are impatient, and batter at the door."

"Where they may batter long enough, devil!" exclaimed Mervyn, entering the apartment, whence he had vanished for a moment in the confusion, without being observed. "Those doors are triple brass against every thing but artillery; I have bolted them! Come, if ye are men! The back way; the garden! 'Tis for our lives!" Then suddenly leaping on Oates, he struck him in the arm in time to discharge his pistols upward, instead of at himself, the original aim. In a moment Claude was upon him, dashed away the pistols, and struck him a tremendous blow with the butt-ends. Oates fell, yelling murther! with all his might, but Blood hit him another severe blow which seemed to quiet him. He was about to strike a third, which would have effectually silenced him, when Van Huysman arrested his arm.

"Spare him—Vengeance is His!" he exclaimed. "Leave him to repentance, if it may be! Have you any way of flight, as Mervyn seems to say? If so let us begone instantly!"

"Hark, below!" exclaimed Claude. A low up-

roar of voices, and heavy blows at the portal, rang up the corridor.

Blood seized a torch, and pistol in hand, opened the door of that mysterious staircase, down which Mervyn had so often longed to penetrate. He bolted the door after them to delay pursuit, and took the same precautions with three others in succession which they encountered. They traversed a suite of deserted and mouldering chambers, descended another flight of stairs, and found themselves in a hall which terminated by a ruined portico on the garden.

Blood hastily extinguished the torch, and motioned them to halt for a moment in the shadow of the portico. The ruined garden lay before them with its broken statues and weed-overgrown terraces. It was a bitter night, and though the moon shone with great brilliancy, the snow fell in such thick masses that even the colonel's expert eye was perplexed. He listened attentively, and for a moment heard no sound but the crackling of the frosty trees. But suddenly the gleam of a partisan caught his eye, and he counted three in succession along the garden-wall, on the exterior. The wall at the end seemed, however, unguarded; probably because it was fenced on the other side with a deep ditch, or rather sewer, flowing into the Thames.

Blood saw there was but one course, and he took it instantly. Motioning his companions to imitate

his movements, he couched down on all fours, and stole cautiously along the edge of the wall, his hands and feet sinking deep in the snow. In this fashion they came to the end of the garden, for it was impossible to cross the open ground without attracting the observation of a sentinel who had perched himself on a broken pedestal at the gate. The wind was very high, and blew Blood's hat off into some bushes, but he dared not attempt to follow it. It was evident that the report of the pistol had not reached the ear of these soldiers; probably deadened by the massive walls which intervened, and the noise of the river.

The fugitives now paused at a signal from the colonel, still couching like so many monstrous frogs. He then raised himself cautiously, and whispering to Mervyn that he must take care and not smother in the ditch, stooped and desired him to mount the wall on his shoulders. Mervyn made a sign for the ecclesiastic to go first, but Blood gave him a sharp twitch, and muttering "I'll be the last—he is safe!" the youth dared not disobey any longer. In a moment he was over and up to his waist in a ditch of black and feculent mud, with the slimy timbers of a ship-yard before him, which looked so high and steep that the worst part of their task seemed before them.

Van Huysman, aided by Claude, followed with somewhat more difficulty, and with a splash which

seemed to attract the sentinel's notice, for they heard one call out "Comrade, hear ye that?" Claude almost leaped over with his French agility, and Blood followed. "Fly, fly!—each a separate way," he exclaimed. "If the priest returns to the queen's palace, he will be safe—Claude, look to yourself—Mervyn and I will take refuge in a place in Shadwell. Adieu all!" And he scrambled up the timbers of the ship-yard, with the agility of a wild cat.

"Farewell, my child!—we will meet again," said Van Huysman.

"Every man for himself," muttered Blood, and, clutching Mervyn from Van Huysman's embrace, he ran off. Claude and Van Huysman disappeared in another direction, and not before it was time, for all Alsatia was roused by the report of the fire-arms. The friar with the horn, afraid that his betrayal would be discovered, began to blow lustily; shouts of "Help, help! a baily, a baily!" rang far and near—"Sheriff's officers, sheriff's officers!—Tipstaves, tipstaves!"

The tumult was increased by the hoarse braying of the sentinel's horn; windows opened far and near; men rushed out with naked swords and muskets, women with shovels, fire-forks, or any other weapons that came to hand, all shouting and yelling in the direst confusion. Amidst the uproar, the bankrupts and others who had any very pe-

culiar reason for avoiding a rencounter with the ministers of justice, ran desperately to the water's edge, yelling "A sculler, a sculler!—ten guineas for a boat, a boat!" Numbers of small boats instantly put off to the rescue of these unfortunate individuals, but over all Blood's terrible voice was pre-eminent. A sculler approached, rowed by a gigantic fellow, who, however, kept at a cautious distance from the stairs, calling out "Cash first, cash first!—won't be diddled!"

"Ay, 'tis the only friend in need!" exclaimed Blood, tossing a moidore into the fellow's boat. "Here, here—another at Shadwell Lock."

The sculler's head instantly touched the stairs, and a crowd of miserable fugitives made a rush to enter it. But the colonel knocked them down right and left with his bludgeon, threw Mervyn in, followed himself, and instantly pushed off, amidst a general yell of despair from the crowd. But the colonel's heart was steeled to supplications, and he laughed scornfully as every stroke of the oar placed them at a greater distance.

"The birds are flown for whom the springe is set," he observed. "But I'll be revenged on master fowler Oates some day!—Rogues! I'll warrant, they'll have a good swill at my claret!"

This thought seemed to be very bitter to him, for he dwelt on it almost till they reached Shad-

well, which they soon accomplished, as both wind and tide were in their favour.

Blood dismissed the waterman on landing, with a moidore more than his fee, to secure his secrecy, and Mervyn found himself standing on a stone causeway which led to two or three straggling houses. Shadwell at that period was a mean village, surrounded by marshy fields, and principally tenanted by fishers, and men who picked up a living in various ways on the river. Blood led the way up a narrow miry lane, and paused before the ruins of a house, which from the black and crumbling beams visible in a bright moonlight, had evidently been destroyed by fire. To Mervyn's very great surprise, the colonel stooped and whistled at a sort of trap-door, visible amidst the heaps of fallen rubbish by chinks of light all around it, which had once been the cellar of the ruin. This whistle was answered by another, to which Blood again replied in a very peculiar tone; a noise of unbarring was heard, the trap-door slided back, and a woman appeared on a flight of stone steps, anxiously shading a torch, which she carried so as to throw its full light on the visiter's face. She was a tall masculine creature, with coarse shaggy features, very visible tokens of a beard, and an arm which, being bare to the elbow, displayed a sinewy strength not usually appertaining to the fair sex.

"In the devil's name, who—what—why?" was her laconic but expressive address.

"By the Lord Harry! but I should know that voice," exclaimed the colonel, examining the Amazonian attentively. "Agad! but can it be? Yes, it is—and yet no, it *is* impossible! Why, Tom Hunt, Tom Hunt, have you forgotten me?"

"Adzooks! what—by daggers and pistols, the great colonel himself!" exclaimed the seeming lady, rushing up and giving Blood a hug which almost made him cry mercy. "Od's bodikins and tripe!—why, colonel, colonel, if you an't as welcome as Easter offerings to a starved curate, hang me—that's all! Hollo, boys, hollo, below there,—the colonel, the colonel!"

This gladsome shout seemed to break a yelling chorus of some strange melody which resounded from the cellar below. There was a dead silence, and then a voice shouted, "I say, Moll, Moll! what's the blare? Are the hookers there?"

"No, no, boys; all sound as Paul's steeple—the colonel is come to see us!" returned the Amazon.

"Whom have you below, Hunt?" said Blood.

"Oh, only the gang—Parrot, Captain Mason, Carstairs, Rumsey, and one or two other right-down devil-blossoms," replied the disguised ruffian. "All's safe as one o'clock on a frosty morning when the watch is asleep. Come down, come down, worthy colonel. But what's the squeaker?"

"The young useful of whom I spoke," replied the colonel. "Never mind perusing him now, Hunt; he is in the blush as yet. Lead the way—but how in the negro's name below, came you in such a trim?"

"Oh, it's all about that unpleasant business of the Aldersgate miser—that fool, Red-Nose, knocked him in the head for squeaking, you know," said Tom with a grin. "But see how I can put it on! Come, gentlemen—this way, gentlemen! La, an't you welcome though—la, though!"

And imitating the mincing step of a chamber-maid, the Amazon guided them down a flight of stone steps, some of which were very loose, into the haunt below.

As they descended, Mervyn formed a clearer notion of the society in which he was to mingle. It was in a large cellar, evidently once in use as a marine warehouse, the walls bare, black, and dripping with damp, although there was an enormous sea-coal fire blazing. Several rough-hewn tables, chairs, and stools were the only furniture, and a motley collection of men and women were engaged playing at dice, drinking, swearing, and smoking, in a kind of brown mist, the exhalations of which almost choked Mervyn. The dresses of these gentry were as various and incongruous as possible; some wore the richest velvets, tricked out in all the flashy finery of the day; others were in rags and tatters: but a perfect equality seemed to reign among them.

Blood's appearance attracted immediate attention; and no sooner was he recognised, than a loud, long, and vociferous cheer vented the delight and enthusiasm of the company. The colonel received these honours with the calm indifference of one accustomed to them, shook hands with some few, and assumed to the whole band a tone of mastery and chieftainship which seemed implicitly admitted.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, as soon as the first uproar had subsided, "thanks for your kind reception, which must needs be disinterested enough, for here is my purse" (and he threw an empty one on the table). "Boys, I must have this filled again—they have hunted me out of Alsatia—me and my son—but, 'sdeath, they shall find they had better not!"

"I have only a moidore, but that is yours, splendid colonel," exclaimed Tom Hunt. "Pish! the fiend take it, I have only the change of one. I gave seven shillings to a watchman to let Parrot loose."

"And so he did; Jack Parrot is not the man to forget it," said a long lean individual near a wooden bowl, the contents of which he seemed somewhat the better for.

"All we have is yours, colonel," shouted another ruffian. "I'll cut the rascal's wizen that says you nay, even if you want the skin from his back!"

This threat, or perhaps some other motive, instantly produced a display of purses.

"No, no, comrades! Tom Blood is not the man to take charity, even from the men he has made," exclaimed that worthy. "So long as the world produces fools to sow, there will be wise men to reap; and these pistols of mine shall yield me as good a rental as the clearest estate in England—so pocket your purses again."

"We must to the old project, colonel. I am sure 'tis almost rotten-ripe," said Tom Hunt, with a sly look.

"Hush! the May bloom is fresh," said Blood, significantly. "Come, gentlemen, be seated, and go on with your jollification. Methinks I heard some song a-roaring; if so, roar on. I am in good tune to be your chime-master; for when a man is desperate he should be merry, having nothing to fear."

The new guests seated themselves, and a mug of punch was handed to each; after which, at Blood's repeated request, the song was resumed, Tom Hunt leading it off, and the rest joining in a boisterous chorus. When it concluded, drinking and riotous conversation became the order of the feast.

Mervyn soon felt the soporific influence of the dense atmosphere into which he had entered from the fresh cold air of the river, and nodded in his

chair. This was observed by Parrot, who had paid him considerable attention, and kindly spreading his cloak on a bench, he invited him to repose. This invitation was eagerly accepted, and in a few minutes Mervyn was insensible even to the noise and tumult around him.

CHAPTER XVI.

COLONEL BLOOD'S PLOT.

SOME hours elapsed ere Mervyn woke from his deep slumber of exhaustion, and when he did, the morning light was streaming in through the cracks in the trap-door above. The noisy company had, however, all departed, and only Blood remained, who was anxiously superintending a steak as it broiled on the hot embers. Mervyn felt feeble and giddy, and went to seat himself by the fire, shivering rather from illness than cold.

"How pale thou art child!" said the colonel, in a kind tone. "Courage!—fortune must be nigh weary of making us her footballs, and the verge of ill is the brink of good. We will not rest stewed up in this cellar; for thou wilt wither like a rose, deprived of light. An it like thee, we will out

and enjoy this bright morning on the water, when we have broken our fast on a collop and stoup of ale."

"But shall we not be pursued and caught by those bloodhounds?" said Mervyn, sadly.

"Troth no, if my project holds good," replied the colonel. "But we must forth in disguise. Thou art so fair and beardless a youngster, that I intend thee to pass for a girl; and for myself, I shall assume the garb of a doctor of divinity—not the first wolf in sheep's clothing, Mervyn! And so transmogrified, we may breathe God's air, and warm us in his sun, at freedom, like—ha, ha, the thought will out—like serpents."

"Any thing to escape from this loathsome robber-hole," said Mervyn, hastily.

"Yea, and I have a project afloat which may perchance sail with thee into a good harbour," said Blood, musingly. "What think you, boy, if I get you a snug refuge under the very whiskers of the law herself?—a lodging in the Tower?"

"I can get my board too at Newgate," replied Mervyn, doggedly.

"But as a prisoner—now I mean you to be a guest," said Blood. "You must needs think, Mervyn, that as a father, I am grieved to see thee thrown among the villanous men with whom my persecuting fortune herds me? Well, I have an ancient friend who is marshal of the——of one of the Tower

wards, and who, for the love he bears me, will give you secret entertainment till this storm blows over. Oates will never think to look for thee there, no more than a cat would expect a mouse to nestle in her fur. At all events we will to the Tower to-day, for, by heaven! the most dangerous spots in England are now the safest for us!"

There was a desperate energy in Blood's tones which struck the youth as rather superfluous, but there was something so delicious in the idea of quitting the ruffianly society in which he had lately mingled, that he did not venture to analyze the hesitation with which he replied to this fine project.

"Agad, boy, you shall understand me better than hitherto," continued the colonel. "I have but showed thee the dark side of my character, but there are lights in it too. Desperate as I am, hunted by men's detraction and hate even to death, I will show thee how brave men take fortune's kicks—even with a smile! I will have my jest though I die on't—that is, if Hunt can get the disguises; if not, we must stay here, and die like rats in a morticed hole."

"But what jest do you speak of, colonel? Alas! your jokes in general wring blood, not laughter," said Mervyn.

"Why do you not call me father, boy?" said Blood, sternly." Methinks I have done enough

to deserve it, even if nature had not conferred it. But fear not, Mervyn—this joke shall be all laughter and no harm, unless men split their sides to hear it told."

"But what is this joke?—on whom is it to be played?" replied Mervyn, impatiently.

"It is to serve as a merry prologue to your introduction in the Tower," said Blood, with seeming carelessness. "But I doubt if the disguises can be procured for our masque."

"All's right, all's right, glorious colonel! here they are," interrupted a loud voice, and a bundle rolled at their feet, followed by Tom Hunt, still in his woman's garb, and frisking merrily as he descended.

"The diguises, Tom?" said the colonel, quietly. "Well, well, don't open it yet—the steak is done, and with a few mugs of your best acqua vite to wash it down, we will take in provender for our enterprise."

"But this jest!—what is it?" insisted Mervyn, with an involuntary feeling of distrust.

"Well, boy, as I was telling thee when this rough wench broke in upon us," said Blood, quietly lifting his reeking steak from the embers—"What was I saying?—some few months agone—Have you never a wooden platter, Hunt?—I was chatting with my old schoolfellow, Mr. Edwards, in the Tower, about the fortunes of my life, or rather mis-

fortunes, and I was something emptily boasting of the many disguises I had assumed, and how I could deceive any man breathing, twice in the same hour. Whereupon old Talbot said that no man that had once seen me, and heard my voice, could mistake me again, though as arrant an ass as Balaam's. To which I swore lustily that I could cozen him, for as wise as he thought himself—and thereupon we wagered a supper and canaries to be eaten and drunk by as many friends as I could bring with me, provided myself was undiscovered."

"Excellent, excellent!" said Hunt, rubbing his hands joyfully.

"Well, to amuse myself even in these late great distresses of mind," continued Blood, "I put my project in execution. I disguised me as a doctor of divinity—you do remember, Mervyn, how oft and in what strange garbs I left you in Whitefriars?"

"Marvellously well!"

"About a fortnight ago—Tom Hunt, thy brandy is shamefully adulterated with water; 'tis enough to damn thy vintner!—nay, not so long ago—I went to the Tower in that disguise, with a woman whom for the nonce I called my wife, under pretext of seeing the curiosities. The plot took marvellously. Edwards had no more recognition of me than Adam. While we were looking at some of the toys there, my wife feigned to have a qualm in her stomach, and I

prayed the old gentleman to send for some spirits, intending to make a jollification and discovery. But unfortunately some strangers came in, and I was obliged to defer my explanation. Old mother Edwards was very civil to my wife, and invited her to repose on a bed upstairs, so that when we parted it was with every mark of civility and mutual good-will. This good success put it into my head to carry the joke out. A few days after, I went with a present of four pair of the best white scented gloves from my wife, with her grateful compliments. In short, being well entertained, I repeated my visits without discovering myself; so that at last the old man took me in so hot a friendship, that having a son, who was daily expected home from sea, and who wanted a wife, he proposed to me, if I had a daughter, to make a match between the families. I was foolish enough to pretend I had one—a fair likely wench, with a good two hundred pound for fortune, left by some grandame. To make a long story short, we fully agreed upon a match between the young people, and in token thereof called each other brothers. Yester morn it was agreed that I should bring my daughter to be introduced to her relations elect—and I at first thought of bribing some young slut to play the part. But on deliberate advice, methinks that were carrying the joke too far, to show them a—a—such a body as a daughter-in-law; so I have

determined to take you, Mervyn, in disguise. Then after a little becoming mirth, we will reveal the whole sham, and the goodhumour thereby engendered will float thee at once into the good graces of the honest couple. Wilt go, lad?"

"If it be, as you say, only a harmless frolic," said Mervyn, somewhat dubiously.

"If!—bah, what *if* when the great colonel pledges his immortal word 'tis so?" said Tom Hunt, in a lofty tone. "At all events, youngster, you are his son, and obedience is a filial duty. But how will you play your own part, child, as a puritan parson's daughter? Canst amble tediously, turn up thine eyes on occasion, leer with sanctity, and play the devil with the saintly grimaces of the pure ones?"

"I can at least hold my tongue—a virtue which may be practised with approbation by all women," said the youth, smiling. "In short, I will be any thing, or do any thing, to escape from this dungeon."

The breakfast was soon despatched, and they proceeded to dress. Mervyn's toilet was soon completed, and elaborately finished off by Hunt, who boasted of his skill in female habiliments. A plain looped petticoat of brown stuff concealed his nether garments; neat gray stockings, black buckles and high-heeled shoes, finished his lower apparel. Stays of dark fawn-coloured silk, well padded, a clear-

starched collar, and a little precise coif, beneath which his dark hair clustered in thick rings, completed his garb. Blood put himself into his disguise as a doctor of divinity; he wore a little band, a long false beard, a cap with ears, every thing except the gown, instead of which he had a black cloak of capacious width. Thus equipped, and having made some agreement with Hunt which Mervyn did not overhear, they sallied boldly forth from their subterraneous hiding-place.

Blood took a boat directly, and ordering the waterman to keep on the Surrey side of the river, and not to hurry himself, they sailed merrily out on the bright waves. It was a clear frosty morning, and the keen bright air braced Mervyn's nerves, and restored the roses to his pale cheeks. Blood wrapped him in his own cloak, and reclining indolently on the prow, seemed lost in a deep and gloomy meditation. Mervyn was rather surprised to see that they floated past the Tower, and that Blood gave directions to land them at Whitehall-stairs: but he was afraid to speak, lest he might attract the waterman's observation.

They landed at the place indicated, and walked up a road which led to Chelsea-fields. Crossing two or three hedges, they reached a watering-place for cattle, formed by a very deep pond overhung by weeping willows, white with the morning frost.

As they approached, Mervyn perceived two or three horsemen grouped together, and handing about a large tin bottle, to which each in turn seemed to apply his lips with great devotion. They were all dressed as substantial puritan burghers of the time—of that sober class which abhorred all court-fripperies, as so many lime-twigs set by the devil to insnare men's souls. One of them held the rein of an unoccupied horse, of powerful make, as seemed necessary, for it carried both a saddle and a pillion, as if for two to ride.

"Here they are, notable brethren of the faith, Lord-seekers, all!" said Blood, laughingly. "Look —know you not, Hunt?—By'r lady! he looks the surly covenanting knave, better than the dimpled wench of a hostelry.—Ho, Parrot, all right?"

"As Paul's clock, when it isn't wrong," replied that gentleman. Mervyn looked in mute surprise at the colonel for an explanation.

"Oh, it is as Parrot says, all right," he said, carelessly. "To horse, Mervyn!—I sent a message in the early morning to Edwards, telling him I meant to bring my daughter and some of my friends with me, to see the Tower, and, as I have made such visits ere now profitable to him, he has no gainsay."

Though not thoroughly satisfied with this explanation, Mervyn could offer no objection, and Blood,

laughing hoarsely, lifted him on the pillion, where he sat sideways like a woman. Blood then vaulted on before him, and, giving his horse a switch, the whole cavalcade set off at a sober pace to London.

Passing over a succession of fields and marshland, on a very rude road, which, however, was luckily hard frozen, they entered the Mall, and so to Charing-cross. As they jogged on, Mervyn could not help remarking the different styles in which they were treated by the different classes of men they encountered, which might have served as an illustration of the conflicting temper of the nation at the period. The men of plain, precise garb—the substantial middle-class burgher—treated them with respect; paid principally to the puritanical cut of Blood's coat, which intimated that he was one of the expelled nonconformist clergy. On the other hand, the glittering young cavaliers, whom they met taking their morning ride in all the pomp of velvet and embroidery, never failed to treat them with some satirical observation, some tart gibe, and often studied rudeness, which the colonel bore with singular patience and composure, but which made Mervyn's blood boil. The observations addressed to him personally were such as frequently to bring the blush to his own cheeks, as it might to the young maiden's he personated; but Blood took no notice, and exhorted him to do the same.

"Why, child," he said, "if a man had a mind to punish all the rogues and scoundrels he might meet in this age, all London would go to bed with broken bones; and, if he kept an even-handed justice, himself too."

He then gave the youth some instructions as to how he was to behave himself in his assumed character, and Mervyn thought he dwelt somewhat superfluously on the matter.

The colonel avoided Fleet-street, by threading a number of narrow lanes on the banks of the river, and they emerged at last in Thames-street. Thence their way to the Tower lay in a long straight line through a crowded, populous, and splendid street, by no means resembling the Thames-street of our day, where commerce has usurped the place of fashion. Blood seemed desirous of shunning observation, and rode as fast as the crowded state of the streets allowed him, until they suddenly emerged on a wild broken land, strewed with a few neglected gardens, which bordered the Tower Moat. The battlemented rampart and hoary towers streaming with banderols, the walls bristling with cannon, roused Mervyn's admiration, and elicited an exclamation of delight from him. But the colonel suddenly checked his horse, and turning, with a face deeply flushed—"Why, how now, urchin," he exclaimed; "what the fiend ails thee?" He spoke

with such asperity, and even fierceness of tone, that Mervyn ventured no reply. After a moment's consideration, Blood called to his companions, and said they would ride to the Iron Gate, where he was known. They jogged on at a slow pace along the shore of the river, which then consisted of a raised causeway in a very neglected state, and reined up their jaded horses at last under the frowning battlements of the Iron Gate.

A warder came forward, and respectfully greeted Blood, under the title of Doctor Andrews. The reverend gentleman then alighted, and assisted his fair companion to do the same, inquiring how worthy Master Edwards was, and that excellent woman, his wife. The warder answered that Edwards was marvellously well, considering his years, and all the better for his hopes to see his reverence. "Ay, ay, my brother and I are excellent friends, and hope to be better," said Blood, with a slight smile. "I have brought some brethren, d'ye see, friend Giles, to have a stare at those carnal man-glittering stones, whereof your master hath the keeping, as well to marvel at the greed and vanity of human worms, as to gratify the woman-curiosity of my young daughter here. Good help us, Master Giles, are there any news of this sea bridegroom of ours?"

"Captain Edwards of the Sea-Shark? Oh, I warrant me, master!" said the warder. "His ship

came up to Wapping last night, and waits only a good tide to bring her to the Tower."

"Ay, indeed?" replied Blood, hastily. "Well, well, we must be getting our preparations hastened then. Thou wilt guess, Giles, what is forward when I tell thee this gentleman with the ink-horn at his belt is our scrivener, and the rest I have brought as witness to a certain matter between my brother Edwards and me."

"Ay, marry, goodfaith and indeed!" said the warder, indulging himself with a stare at the bride, who bashfully drew on her coif. "No offence, miss, but can't help wishing you joy. Good lack, Master Andrews, we shall have a marriage-feast soon?"

"And fear not but thou shalt have an invitation to the wedding, honest Giles," said the doctor. "Prithee, charge not thyself with our horses; they are too joint-weary to run away, for we are wayfarers from out of Samaria—I mean we have ridden far. Come, daughter, I trow we shall find Master Edwards in his usual snug tabernacle?"

He turned as he spoke to give his arm to Mervyn, and his cloak opening an instant, the latter thought he saw a pair of pistols in his girdle, and a long dagger—almost rapier. However, as this was only in accordance with the desperation of his character, he took little notice of the circumstance. The whole company now entered the gates, and crossing a courtyard in demure silence, passed the White Tower,

and came on a smooth square of grass, used as a bowling-green by the garrison. A warder whom they questioned told them that Master Edwards was at his usual place in the armory, and respectfully opened a massive postern, saying it was a shorter way. As they entered Blood whispered in a tone more calculated to excite terror than caution, "Boy, play thy part well till I say, *the game is up*, and then do as thou shalt see me do."

Mervyn had no time to ruminate on the meaning of these words; they had entered the horse armory, and the long array of those iron statues of war instantly attracted his attention. The effigies of many a kingly warrior stood before him, arrayed in rich suits of the armour worn by some of them on the great days which make their names eternal in the memory of England.

At the opposite end of the armory, chafing his hands over a charcoal brazier, and talking merrily with the warder, sat a hale old man, still fresh and bluff in the cheek, though eighty winters had sprinkled their snows on his head. Seeing strangers enter, he came to meet them at a strong hearty pace, and almost instantly changed his look of inquiry into one of joyful welcome.

"Why, God bless us!" he exclaimed, "you are late, brother Andrews, you are late—but all the welcomer—like a tardy spring. Welcome, welcome,

all, and pretty little mistress too,—nay, not so little neither! daughter mine that is to be. Nay, you cannot refuse an old graybeard."

And so saying, the old man sealed his welcome with a kiss which he bestowed on the blushing and trembling bride-elect.

"Ay, ay, sweet Mistress Alice, there's grace in a blushing face," said Edwards, benevolently smiling. "You must excuse us old fellows; we are by and gone, by and gone—but every dog has his day. An now I were my boisterous sea-son you might blush with a cause. Lord love you, child, how he will dote on you! Why, Master Andrews, Master Andrews, she's a world handsomer than we bargained for—tall, tall, very tall! Well, well, last time my boy was on dry land—I call him 'boy,' miss, though I warrant he's as stout a man as ever slashed cutlass into a French skull.—Well, as I was saying, as he was agoing aboard, 'Father,' says he—I'd been a-talking to him about a wife, you know,—'what you say about the comfort of a home and a wife is all very true, I dare say, and if so be you'll pick me out one, why I'll marry her when I come back, and that's enough.' Marry, mistress, you have only to pray for a Spanish war, and you'll have a lapful of ducats before I can say Jack Robinson, for he's as brave a seaman, though I say it, as any lion of them all—there!"

Mervyn had by this time, with his natural viva-

city, entered into the humour of the scene, and replied with a proper puritanical drawl, "Ay, truly—la, a lion!"

"But where is good Dame Andrews, doctor?" said Edwards.

"Oh, we dropped her on the way; she has found the stairs to your lodgings which you so kindly taught her, brother," replied Blood, "and I warrant me now she is in full gossip with your worthy good wife."

"Marry then, by'r leave, we'll join 'em, doctor," said the old man. "I warrant me too we shall find some small matter that will do ye good after your cold ride."

"Nay, first we will have a peep at your baubles, Master Edwards; the ornaments hung by the idolatry of men on the Golden Calf of Royalty," replied the colonel. "These gentlemen here are all from the country, and fond of a stare, except Master Hunt, the scrivener, who hath his deeds with him. And so, after the sight-seeing, we can upstairs to business without interruption."

"With marvellous great pleasure," said Edwards; and Mervyn observed that Hunt screwed his hard features into a momentary but very expressive leer at the colonel. "But may be first, as 'tis a new curiosity, ye'll go and see the graves of little Edward V. and his brother, in the Bloody Tower?"

"La! they whom horrid crookback murdered?"

said Mervyn. "Marry, yes, above all things; 'tis as piteous a tale as Robin-redbreast and the Babes in the Wood,—la, yes, and indeed!"

"I'faith," muttered Blood, "I care not to see such a vain traditionary hole, where suckling catholic kings were thrown or not, as the tale varies! It savours of Romish superstition, Master Edwards, and I do think my friends are more anxious for a gaze at the glittering baubles of state."

"Ay, in good sooth, are we," began Hunt, eagerly, when the colonel interrupted him with a look. "Nay, nay, then, not that I care."

"Plenty of daylight for them too, doctor," said Edwards, good-humouredly. "But our young bride hath her curiosities, and 'tis not for her new father to balk her."

So saying, he led the way to a postern which opened into a quadrangle of the castle, and Blood, reluctant to show his unwillingness, followed quietly.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE REGALIA.

A SHORT walk brought them to St. Katharine's gate, of whose warder Edwards borrowed a bunch of massive keys, and they entered at the little door whence, eleven years past, Duval had carried the unconscious Mervyn from his father's arms, for ever. The deep gloom of the vaulted apartment into which they entered, with its dusky crosslights from above, struck Mervyn with a vague feeling of terror. He turned, he knew not why, to Blood, perhaps to be reassured by his presence, but he was so surprised at the paleness and strange workings of his face that he did not speak. Blood's eyes, too, carefully avoided his, but he made an angry gesture, as if conscious of the youth's observation.

Edwards pointed out a small square excavation recently made, whence he stated the bodies of the murdered princes had been conveyed to Westminster for burial. He related all the circumstances of the discovery with garrulous circumlocution, pleased with the earnest pathetic face with which Mervyn listened.

"Yea, daughter," he continued, "'tis all as true as the daisies; and more than that, though I am not one that puts faith in idle Romish superstitions, still I must say folks *do* report this Tower is haunted. I never put my prisoners here (for I'm marshal of the prisons too) nor will I unless we get overstocked, which is like enough to happen if godly Master Oates continues his foraging among the papists."

"What manner of spirits haunt it, sir?" said Mervyn, with feigned simplicity. "The two sweet little murdered kings?"

"Ay, in their bloody night-robes and minever hoods," said the colonel, in a bantering tone.

"Nay," replied Edwards, deliberately—"nay, but the ghost of a very great catholic noble, who, some say, committed suicide in the room above."

"Who some say!—Nay, sir, he did!" exclaimed Blood, vehemently.

"How know you, brother, of whom I speak?" said Edwards, somewhat angrily. "Faith, doctor, you know not that I speak of the great western

earl, Aumerle, or you would know that men entertain great doubt whether he was not murdered."

"Aumerle!" repeated Mervyn. "How strange it is, that go where I will this name still meets me!"

"Good troth, doctor, they say he committed suicide," pursued Edwards, resolutely; "but I have my own reasons for thinking otherwise. I was on the guard here that night, and nothing shall ever persuade me that it was the earl's voice which answered from within when we heard the groaning."

"Nonsense, brother; be not uncharitable to deem so," said the doctor, prying into the princes' grave, so as to shade his face from Edwards's torch.

"Say what they will, I know what I know," said Edwards. "There were men—and women too—who longed for his death, who had cash to buy the bloody hands fit for such a task."

"Ay, ay, neighbour, but gold cannot bribe stone walls," said the colonel, sharply.

"I doubt, doctor, they dealt with the devil or Colonel Blood—which is much the same," said Edwards, drily.

"Good lord, brother, I do hope you have not taken the papistical court ill-will against that honest gentleman and true protestant," said Blood, with a bitter smile.

"Honest devil and true runaway from all religion and decency," exclaimed Edwards. "Never

stare, madam; I know the man, and of all the black execrable villains under Heaven's light——"

"Fie, fie, Talbot Edwards! I relish not such words in any Christian mouth," said the colonel, hastily.

"Nay, I meant not to offend," replied Edwards. "But whosoever speaks of such a scoundrel with any patience, is already more than half one himself."

"But what folly is this, brother?" said Blood, observing Mervyn's look. "Why should you accuse Colonel Blood, or any man, of taking a life which was already forfeit to the state?"

"To prevent certain secrets from oozing out—what do I know?" said Edwards. "There's my lady, his wife that was—she that hath since married the Lord Howard—more shame to her! I warrant, she knows more of the matter than she dare mention in her prayers."

"Well, and what did you do with this grand earl's carcass? The jury charged him to be staked as a *felo-de-se*, methinks I have heard," said Blood.

"He is not far off;—there he lies, poor noble gentleman," replied Edwards, unbolting and throwing back a small postern which opened on the steep bank of the Tower Moat. The bright sunshine streamed on a long mound running parallel to the ditch, and overgrown with weeds. Blood started as if he had seen a tiger couching at him.

"We buried him there," continued the old man, mournfully—"there, during the confusion of the great fire. The jury's warrant sent him to a cross-road—for they were all red-hot Anabaptist men—but as this is a sort of cross-road between our liberties and the city's, I made bold to read the order mine own way. He has no coffin, no shroud—nothing but a grave."

"He must have been a tall man," said Mervyn.

"Marry, but for the folly of the thought, I could say your mother had seen him, Mistress Alice," replied Edwards. "If your hair now were a shade blacker—yea, if it had the blue blackness of the raven, and your nose were a little less Greek at the end, I could say now——"

"What buried *there?*—no funeral rites, not even a coffin?" interrupted Blood, hastily.

"Buried like a dog, excepting that—" hesitated old Edwards. "But I am sure you'll not blame me, doctor. I could not bear to throw a man into the earth like a dead horse, so I e'en got a catholic priest to bury him according to their way, at night—one father Van Huysman, who was in London then. Heaven forgive me if I did wrong!"

"Amen, and thrice amen!" said Mervyn, whose eyes gushed full of tears. "But if you have done wrong, what heavenly deed was ever wrought on earth?"

"And see, I put a black cross at his head, and

planted the grave with wild thyme—all dead now —but in summer it hath a sweet bloom and fragrance," said Edwards, delighted with Mistress Alice's fervent applause.

"Like your excellently good deed in the nostrils of Heaven!" said Mervyn, wiping his eyes. "But now we are here—do, gentle Master Edwards, show us the rooms above where this poor gentleman was—where he died!"

"Marry, will I—I think a vast of thee, child,' replied Edwards. "And even just as they were left by him twelve long years agone; for all the prisoners do object so strangely to sleep there, that our mild lieutenant presses them not—and they are fallen into total disuse."

"Nay, 'twere too melancholy a sight, brother," said Blood, hurriedly.

"No matter, I would fain see—I love melancholy things!" said Mervyn, very eagerly.

Blood glanced angrily at him, but he was already halfway up the stairs, with Edwards. The company followed, and Blood reluctantly brought up the rear.

The keys of these haunted apartments hung in a rusty bunch on a nail, outside the door. Edwards undid the massive fastenings, and they entered the apartments. Every thing was covered with dust, the tapestry moth-eaten, but many tokens remained to bear witness that the suite had been occupied by

a prisoner of consequence. Blood kept his eye fixed on Mervyn, and was alarmed to observe that he was in a revery, and looked puzzled.

"A silver penny for thy thoughts, child?" he said, with a forced smile.

"La, now, how curious 'tis!" replied Mervyn. "Yet, in good sooth, could I have dreamed it? It seems to me as if I had been here before, and had seen ye all about me. But there was another too—one in black, or—nay, truly, I do think it was a heap of hearse-plumes over a marble visage, and—"

"Folly, folly, daughter," interrupted Blood, sharply. "Is yonder the bedroom of this quiet suite, Master Edwards?"

"Ay, ay, come and look in," replied the old man, and he led the way into the darksome ill-omened apartment we have elsewhere described. "Faugh! things are a little musty here—nothing stirred since my Lord Aumerle's time."

"Yes, too close and musty for me," said Blood, hurriedly. "When you have done your dark gossip, you will find me in the next room."

He then withdrew abruptly.

Both Mervyn and the old man seemed relieved by the doctor's departure, although he left his myrmidons behind. Edwards began by relating the tragical story of the earl's death, much as he had given it at the inquest, and Mervyn listened with strange intensity. Parrot and Hunt, however,

showed considerable impatience, and, looking at their large watches, admonished Edwards that time was flying fast. Accordingly they returned to the sitting-chamber.

As they entered, Mervyn glanced at the colonel, who was seated in an old arm-chair, and involuntarily started, though Blood's manner at the moment had nothing particular in it, and was merely that of listless weariness. Yet it made him muse he knew not clearly on what, but some dim and indistinct association past through his mind. Meanwhile old Edwards, who noticed nothing, brought out what he called a great curiosity—the fatal instrument found near the earl's body—which he handed to Blood. The colonel examined it minutely, and then mechanically amused himself by snapping the dagger in and out of its pistol-haft. At this moment a wild and puzzling thought crossed Mervyn's imagination, that he had seen all that passed before, but whether in another state of existence, or in a dream, he could not tell. He looked bewilderedly at Blood, and at his deformed thumb, and their eyes met. The colonel instantly started up. "Tut, tut, brother Edwards," he exclaimed, "for a bridal party, that shall be soon, you are making us too sad. Show us now your own glittering trinketry."

"In troth, am I—I am to blame," said Edwards. "Come then, let us lock up these dismal rooms,

and pray God they may never again receive so luckless a tenant."

"Amen, father! Amen, indeed!" echoed Mervyn, and in his natural tones, which induced Edwards to look at him for a moment with some surprise. But his suspicions, if any arose in his mind, instantly vanished when he marked the noble expression of the boy's countenance. All followed Edwards to a door which opened again on the bowling-green, which they crossed to the armory. Mervyn wished to see this curious collection at leisure, but the doctor would not allow it, alleging that Mrs. Edwards and his wife were waiting for them.

The old keeper now produced the three massive keys which fastened the iron door of the regalia room, by as many padlocks. Edwards unlocked them with the slow importance of age, and one of the bolts being rather rusty, he was about to call the warder, who was at the opposite end of the armory; but Blood hastily prevented him, and Mervyn perceived that his hand trembled as he pushed the bolt back. Edwards then opened the door with a pressure of his knee, and Mervyn stepped eagerly in after him. A blaze of jewels, lighted by a lofty beam of sunshine, almost dazzled his eyes. On tables of crimson velvet, and arranged in pyramids, shone the magnificent regalia of English sovereignty; the imperial crown

of Edward III., the globes, the sceptres, the jewelled swords, the golden staffs, the rich fountains, salt-cellars, golden spurs, eagles, all afire with jewels, and shooting out long beams of light. In the centre was the royal crown of England, blazing like a sun.

Mervyn uttered an exclamation of joyful surprise ; but at the moment he heard the door bang, and Blood exclaimed, "Now for it—*the game is up!*" At the same time the mock doctor threw his cloak over Edwards's head, and thrust a gag into his mouth, having a plug with a hole to breathe at, which he fastened on in an instant with a waxed leather thong. Hunt at the same time fastened an iron hook to his nose, to prevent him from uttering any sound through that organ.

All this was the work of a moment, and in that space the honest burghers threw off their cloaks, and showed themselves well armed with swords and bludgeons. Mervyn knew not what to think, nor whether this scene was part of the joke.

"In Heaven's name, Blood!" he exclaimed, "what is the meaning of this ?"

"Peace, thou shallow young fool, or thou shalt find the like," said the colonel, in his terrible tones. "Master Edwards, it is in vain to resist. I tell you candidly we are resolved to have the crown, globe, and sceptre ; if you quietly submit, we will spare your life; if not, expect no mercy!"

Edwards nevertheless made a desperate because blind effort to rush to the door, and call out, and Blood instantly knocked him down with a wooden mallet, which he suddenly produced. The poor old man, though severely hurt, made a powerful effort to rise and pull the gag out of his mouth. The colonel then belaboured him with his mallet so unmercifully, that the blood gushed in streams through the cloak. But by this time Mervyn had revived from his trance of surprise, and screaming "Murder!" as loud as he could, he threw himself over the old man, to cover him from the strokes. This action probably saved Edwards's life; Blood paused in his exertions, and clutching Mervyn, muttered, "Nay, I am provided for your bawling too!" and he passed a bandage over his mouth, which made him unable to utter a sound. The companions then listened for a moment very earnestly, to ascertain if any alarm was raised—but all was silent. Hunt meanwhile tied the boy's hands behind his back, in spite of his vehement struggles.

Finding all things tranquil, Blood stooped to see if the old man was dead. The unfortunate keeper, probably afraid that these attentions were directed to his throat, made another desperate effort to rise. Blood thrust him violently over, and coolly observing, "Nothing will quiet him but this," drew his dagger and stabbed him. Mervyn, however, as a last effort, threw himself on the old man's body,

and received the second blow in the fleshy part of his own arm. Pain and horror then deprived him of sensation, and both he and Edwards lay motionless as corpses.

"Curse the young fool!—we shall have to leave him behind," muttered Blood. "Wipe my dagger, Hunt—tut, we wanted not the old idiot's scanty remains of life!"

Blood then seized the crown, and put it under his cloak. Parrot stuffed the globe into his capacious breeches, and Hunt, taking out a little file, began sawing at the sceptre, intending to break it in half, as it was too long to carry whole. But while eagerly hastening these operations, steps were heard in the armory. Blood put the crown in its place, and muttering to his comrades to be on the watch, went hastily out, leaving the door ajar.

Hunt stood listening at the door with a pistol in each hand, ready to dart out, in case his leader required any assistance. He heard a rough hearty voice shout "Holloa, you there, land-lubber, who are you?"

"I am the Tower chaplain, brother," replied Blood, in a mild insinuating tone.

"Why, man, ye're big enough to be the chaplain of a man-of-war, and preach a sermon in a storm," said the stranger. "But, dammee, don't you know me then?—though I don't know you to be sure, not being a great frequenter of your bitter conventicles

ashore. My name's Edwards—just come home from sea, and my father keeps the Regalia hereabouts. Do you know where he is, reverence?"

"You will find him upstairs with some friends, and he will be right glad to see you," replied Blood.

"Well, thankee—ay, marry, will he—and if I'm not much out of my reckoning, he's hooked me a wife by this time," said Edwards, and touching his broad hat, he ran down the armory out of sight.

"Quick march, lads!—no time to be lost," exclaimed the colonel, re-entering. "Take each of you something—damn that sceptre, Hunt!—you can't file it—take the globe."

The robbers obeyed with great diligence.

"And now, boy," exclaimed Blood, seizing Mervyn, who had by this time staggered on his legs, "come along quietly, or stay here and be hanged as certainly as Newgate stands."

"Let us tie the old fellow's hands," exclaimed Hunt.

"Nonsense—it is useless—he is settled," said Blood. "Besides we have no time—come!"

The ruffian then seized Mervyn by the arm, and dragged him out, too confused to resist. They banged the door after them, Hunt bestowing a parting kick on the seemingly lifeless body of the old man. But they were mistaken in this supposition, for they had hardly hurried past the warder in the armory

before they heard old Edwards shouting lustily, "Treason! murther!"

"On, on," exclaimed Blood, "a moment lost gives our scrags to the rope! On, boy, or I bury my dagger to the hilt in your ribs!"

"I care not—slay me! Help, murder, help!" shouted Mervyn, who had now succeeded in removing his gag.

"Mervyn, for the love of Heaven, give not your father to the hangman!" said Blood, with great agitation, and glancing at his dagger irresolutely. "Yonder is the main-guard—be silent or—or—"

"I'll throttle him if he but breathes;" muttered Hunt.

"Leave me, then, leave me here, monster!" said Mervyn, wildly, "I will not a step beyond! This is the Bloody Tower; I will die here!"

As he spoke the voice of young Edwards, at the highest pitch of his stormy tone, was heard on Tower-hill, yelling "Treason, treason! the crown is stolen!" The door of the guard-room, which they were approaching, opened, and an officer ran out, asking what was the matter. Blood jogged Hunt's elbow, and both clutching the youth by his arms, scudded over the courtyard to the gate of the drawbridge, where a single sentinel was standing. But the alarm was now general, and the warder, suspecting something wrong from their hurried manner, and hear-

ing the cry of " Stop them ! Stop thieves !" levelled his partisan at Blood's breast, who was the first of the group. The colonel instantly stepped forward, and discharged a pistol at his head, but he fell down, and so avoided the shot.

The drawbridge terminated in a ward-house, and a little gate, at which a soldier stood sentinel. Blood exclaimed " Come on, he will not resist ; he is a coward by his eye !" and they rushed on. The man instantly threw down his arms, and ran into the ward-house.

The robbers hurried rapidly through the outward gate, and found themselves safely on the wharf. Still guided by Blood they ran towards St. Katharine's gate, where their horses waited, joining in the now general yell of " Stop the rogues !" Blood's canonical habit, and the substantial burgher-look of his companions, hindered people from suspecting them, and they were close upon the horses when suddenly a figure darted from a low public-house on the way, followed by three or four stout men with bludgeons, who yelled out, " Here he is—lo, the man ! Seize him in the king's name ! It is Blood !"

" Hell-hound, take thy fate !" exclaimed the colonel, striking blindly with his dagger at Oates, for it was he, but he avoided the blow by ducking to the ground. The bludgeon-men, who wore the uniform of the city marshal's catchpoles, now rushed forward, and a pell-mell combat began. Blood laid

about him so fiercely that he quickly made himself a clear space; but a chance blow levelled Mervyn to the ground at the beginning of the struggle, and, at the moment the colonel had nearly hacked his way to his horse, a crowd of soldiers and warders came running towards the gate. Foremost of these was young Edwards, who, cutlass in hand, rushed upon Blood just as he set his foot in the stirrup. The colonel drew another pistol, and fired it almost close to the sailor's forehead, but by some fortunate accident, the ball only grazed his skin. They instantly grappled together, and though Blood saw himself completely surrounded, he continued to make a desperate struggle for the crown, in the course of which some of the jewels dropped out. When at last Edwards contrived to trip him up, and wrested the rich prize from his grasp, and a hundred hands clutched him at once, he yielded with a bitter smile, exclaiming, "Well, I am your prisoner! but no matter; it was a gallant attempt, however unsuccessful, for it was for a crown."

"Now, Blood, now you are my spoil and my prisoner!" said Oates, drawing nigh, his countenance black and battered with last night's work. "Gentlemen, I have a warrant for his body, and that of the young villain who lies bleeding there. Surrender him to these officers."

"They cannot—they dare not!" said Blood, fiercely. "I am taken within the liberties of the Tower, and

am the lieutenant's prisoner only, who dare not surrender me without a warrant from the king's own hand."

"It is true; secure the other villains! they are escaping," exclaimed a gentleman, who now arrived breathless, at the head of a file of guardsmen. It was Sir John Robinson. Old Edwards, streaming with blood which ran over his eyes, and which he was striving to brush away, followed staggeringly. In the confusion of his sight he mistook Oates in his canonicals for Blood, and exclaimed to his son, "Jack, Jack, this is the villain!" Edwards instantly raised his cutlass to strike him down, when Blood laughed very heartily, and said "Chop away, my lad! you cannot do the world a better service."

"Nay, son, this is the villain!" said the poor old man, still wiping his eyes. "This reverend gentleman is none of them."

During this scuffle and capture, the other villains had made good use of their time. Parrot, indeed, was seized without resistance, but Hunt forced his way to a horse, leaped into the saddle, and rode off, followed by the two other ruffians. There happened, however, to be an empty cart in the street which turned suddenly short, and Hunt, in striving to avoid a collision with it, ran his head against a barber's pole, which projected in the street. He was dashed from his horse by the shock, but almost instantly recovering, put his foot in the stirrup, and was about

to ride off again, when the carter shouted, "This is Tom Hunt, who was in the black attempt on the Duke of Ormonde!—seize him!" He was captured, after a desperate struggle, and conveyed before the lieutenant. But as the seizure took place out of the Tower Liberties, Sir John ordered him to be taken before Justice Smith, a magistrate of the city.

A large crowd had now gathered, which blocked up Tower-hill. Some soldiers picked up Mervyn, whose female habiliments were nearly all torn from his back; his wounded arm streamed with blood, and his dark hair was clotted thickly with the same. Oates had previously recognised him, and claimed him of the lieutenant, in virtue of his warrant; but Sir John would not even hear him. Oates in vain alleged that he had been on the watch for the prisoners all day, and that he had nearly captured Blood the night before; the lieutenant refused to do any thing without the king's express commands, and ordered the prisoners, under a strong guard, to the White Tower, whither he would follow and take their examination. They were accordingly taken off.

Young Edwards proposed to mount some soldiers on the horses, and pursue the other robbers. But the cautious lieutenant would not hear a word on the subject. "Follow them yourself, if you will, Master Edwards," said he; "it is your business, and not mine. I dare not trench on the city pri-

vileges, and my jurisdiction stops at these gates. Meanwhile, warders, lead in these horses—they are forfeit to the Tower."

This order was promptly obeyed, and the lieutenant, troubling himself only with the regalia, which he collected and carried with him, entered the Iron Gate. Old Edwards was by this time exhausted with suffering and loss of blood, and fainted in his son's arms, who, uttering as many curses as he could possibly condense into five minutes, and assisted by some of the crowd, carried the poor old man to his lodgings in the Tower.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE COURT OF CHARLES II.

Blood and his young victim were meanwhile conveyed to a room in the White Tower, entirely destitute of furniture, the bare stone walls lighted only with a bull's eye, set very high in the thickness of the massive stones. Blood walked there with a sort of sullen pride, folding his arms, and scowling contemptuously at the numerous gazers who besieged their way. Sometimes, indeed, he glanced at Mervyn with an expression of remorse, and asked him in a moved tone if his arm pained him; but the youth returned no answer but a look of disdain and hatred. One of the warders, however, humanely bandaged his fast-flowing wound.

Sir John Robinson followed, and the lieutenant commenced with Mervyn. But to all his questions

he found, to his great surprise, that the youth kept a resolute and dogged silence, which Blood continued to applaud with his fiery eye and gestures. Sir John grew much exasperated, and inquired of Mervyn if he thought the rack and the thumb-screw were altogether out of date in the Tower. To which Mervyn replied recklessly that he neither knew nor cared.

Finding, as he supposed, that the boy was too well tutored, Sir John turned and commenced an examination of the older prisoner. To the preliminary questions concerning his name and profession, Blood answered readily; but when the lieutenant endeavoured to extort some account of his late exploit and accomplices, he was met by a sullen and impenetrable refusal to reply. Finding, after many trials, that no information whatever could be elicited from the prisoners, Sir John arose in a passion.

"Well then, Mr. Blood," he exclaimed; "since you refuse to answer even in your own defence, I will to his majesty, and obtain a warrant from him to get at the truth by other means. You are the king's prisoner, and I trow no factious Habeas shall drag you out of the king's fortress till the last stone crumbles on my head."

"And tell the king, Sir John!" said Blood, with energy—"tell the king that if I am com-

pelled to confess any part of this affair, *I will confess the whole!*"

Sir John seemed struck by these remarkable words, and the implied menace. He mused for an instant very thoughtfully, and then walked up to the ferocious prisoner, and spoke some words in a low tone, to which Blood replied in the same. Sir John then exclaimed with visible agitation, "Sirs, I must to the king on the instant—and look that during my absence no man have speech of these villains. Yet hold—let one stay with them, to see they hold no private discourse—and then again, 'tis not necessary—it can do no harm."

The lieutenant gave these contradictory orders in an obviously puzzled tone. He then stopped short near his secretary,

"How say you, Shelley?—we may leave them alone?" he said. "Gad's sooth! the king needs no more lies learned about him—eh? We are secure, eh? Look ye, William Lockyer, go to my lady, and tell her not to take more than three warders to cluster her coach. I trow, there is no great danger to her precious person between here and Temple-bar, though Claude Duval be abroad."

"Colonel Blood is known to be a man of desperate resolves," said the secretary, dubiously. "It hath been that men of as great courage, on the failure of an enterprise—as for example, Mark An-

tony at Philippi (nay, Alexandria—'twas Brutus at Philippi), have laid unlawful hands on themselves, and so cheated the—the—excuse the word, Mr. Blood—the gallows."

"If I had feared the thing—much less the word—I were not now here, master penman," said Blood, grimly. "But as to suicide, dread not that. I am no Roman fool. For myself, I rather mistrust I shall be murdered, for the burglar oft throws into a ditch the tool he has used, to be rid of its accusing company."

"But then in the Tower, murder is always called suicide," said Mervyn, with a kind of smiling wildness, which showed he had reached that point of desperation whence good and evil seem indifferent things. Blood bit his lip, and gave a deep sigh, or rather groan.

"Well, Mr. Blood, I will do your errand with his majesty," said Sir John. "If so be, you do knock your brains out against the wall, why, we cannot help it, and Jack Ketch will be spared a tough job. Shelley, post a guard outside, and leave the prisoners alone—yet we will not be blamed, if aught happen. Put strong irons on both."

"On that boy, Sir John?" exclaimed Blood. "Load me with an anchor weight if you will, but would you fasten a pennon like a mainsheet?"

"You have heard my orders, Shelley," said the lieutenant, peremptorily. "Not that I would offend

you, colonel, for God only knows whether you are now at your worst pass, seeing that fortune is a very wave beneath you, and no sooner casts you to the sands ere she swings you up again to the stars."

The lieutenant's directions were carefully executed, and he himself cleared the dungeon of all but the prisoners, and locking the door, took away the key in his breast. Mervyn heard the rattle of arms, as the sentinels took their stand, and then all was quiet.

A few minutes of profound silence followed. Blood then raised himself on his elbow, for he had couched down with weariness, and looked around, as well as the dim obscurity of the chamber allowed. He perceived Mervyn sitting cross-legged, his hands linked to his fetters, his face pale as death, except his sunken eyes, which were purple and swelled. But it seemed as if he could not shed a tear. Blood looked at him steadfastly, but he could in no way catch his eye.

"Courage, child!" he said at last. "While there's life, there's hope; and I doubt not to save both thee and myself. Thou dost not know, child, what I know."

"Do you lie on still?" said Mervyn with bitter calmness. "But 'tis as good as truth—they cannot sink us lower than we are damned already."

"Talk not so desperately, boy," said Blood, earnestly. "I tell thee, I know a spell to charm

even this demon, Death, which thou dost fear so much."

"Thou liest again, father! I fear him not," said Mervyn, with a moment's vehemence. "It is life, miserable, dishonoured, shame-struck life, I fear. Oh, that I had a dagger! thou shouldst see how long I would tarry in this den of wolves, which men call earth."

"Boy, that blow was not meant for thee," said Blood, with much emotion. "And for the deed itself, it was all done for thee."

"For me!—I'll warrant, on a sudden impulse of generosity? No, my good father, the plot was old to mustiness—planned, rehearsed, before you dreamed of choosing me your heir."

"I grant it, Mervyn; some such plot lay in a chaos, as it were, in my thought," said Blood. "But deem you I had thrown my life on such a desperate die, but for you? The poorest jewel of that crown would have raised you above a beggar's wants; and I was promised wealth, power, pardon—I know not what, as my reward—for I pretend not the jewels were to have been my own spoil."

"And whose else, most virtuous, my father?" said Mervyn.

"No matter—I have a better backer than any I dare name," replied Blood, significantly. "If the receiver be as bad as the thief, why then—he who

wears the crown is nothing better than he who stole it."

"Good faith, this lie outdazzles all we have yet told," said Mervyn with desperate calmness.

"It shall be seen if 'tis not truer than those they tell in pulpits," said Blood, vehemently. "Strike me dead, if I speak false! And call you that robbery for a man to take his own property from the hands of unjust guardians—stingy, grudging, conditioning grumblers like the commons of England?"

"I marvel much I have not club feet, being the devil's son," said Mervyn, wildly. "Well, well, men die but once, that is a comfort. Good night to you, Colonel Blood—good night till we meet again on the gallows."

He then sunk his head back against the wall, and either pretended to sleep or swooned with exhaustion. Blood made no further effort at conversation, but sat for nearly an hour lost in his own gloomy meditations.

This silence was broken by the sudden rattling of a key in the door. Blood started up and glared with wolfish eagerness at the door, while Mervyn scarcely stirred. It was opened, and Sir John Robinson entered, accompanied by another gentleman and seven or eight musketeers.

"Death, I suppose?" said Blood, folding his arms doggedly. "Garrison law—ha! Quick despatch

and no tales told—eh, Sir John? Well, you shall see to-day, my young steel-crabs, how an old soldier should die."

"You are mistaken, colonel," said the lieutenant, "though, by'r lady, for this hour your life has hung upon the breath of each speaker of a score. Gad! man, the council is at its wit's end what to do with ye. Ormonde and the Butler set were for giving you hot work of it, and a taste of the law martial within the hour, but the king and the jolly Duke of Bucks were obstinate for you; and at last his majesty hath most wonderfully resolved to see and examine you himself at Whitehall, where are the queen, her ladies, and the whole court."

"God save King Charles!" shouted Blood. "I did ever know him for a true bully-fellow. Ho, boy, wake! our sun is breaking the clouds. Prithee, Master Lieutenant, put us in some decent trim for the presence, ere we hence."

"The king's orders are to the contrary," replied Sir John. "And—a word in your ear, Master Blood—you have not a minute to lose, lest pernicious counsel prevail, and the world be deprived of your services."

Blood took the hint very sharply, and roused Mervyn himself, who passively submitted to every thing; and the lieutenant carefully examined the locks of their fetters, such was the dread inspired by Blood's ferocious character. This point

ascertained, they were escorted under a strong guard to the Tower stairs, where the lieutenant embarked with his prisoners in his barge, attended by a dozen musketeers, beside rowers. As this strange measure entered the imagination of no man, although all London rang with the attempt on the crown, no particular notice was taken of their passage up the river.

It was noonday when they landed at Whitehall, and entered the great quadrangle of the immense palace, in which was a crowd of coaches, sedans, guards, footmen, and pages, in all the hurry and glittering confusion of a grand day at court. Sir John conducted his prisoners to a guard-room, while Sir Gilbert Elliot, the gentleman who accompanied him, gave information to the king of their arrival. He returned almost directly, with an order to bring the prisoners before his majesty.

Mervyn felt no emotion on hearing this command, not even curiosity. Had he been ordered to follow the messenger to the block, he would have obeyed without hesitation, so stupified was he with grief and ill-usage. He scarcely noticed that he was passing through a series of magnificent but monastic-looking apartments, and then through a spacious corridor, or rather gallery, of richly-carved wood, hung with superb masterpieces of the Italian and Flemish schools. They arrived at last, he knew not how, in a large antechamber, in which

were groups of splendidly-dressed courtiers playing at various games, and talking with a rapidity and violence of gesticulation which showed the eager interest they took in the topics discussed. The speakers all ceased, however, the moment Blood and his companion appeared, and gazed at them as if at chained beasts.

Blood bore this with impatience, and his ferocious eye seemed to scan the groups scornfully, and then he turned away. The lieutenant meanwhile stepped forward and disappeared into another apartment, leaving the prisoners surrounded by their guard. A few moments elapsed, and a personage very richly habited, twirling the gold key of chamberlain, opened the door of the presence-chamber, and called out, "Bring the prisoners forward!" The order was instantly obeyed, and Mervyn found himself in the presence of the Merry Monarch—but under what different circumstances to those in which he had first seen him, at his jolly ease, in Whitefriars!

The presence-chamber of old Whitehall was of vast extent, suiting the pomp of its founder, the kingly Cardinal Wolsey, ere his overblown fortunes withered away. It seemed as if the apartment had sustained little damage or alteration during the century and a half which had elapsed since Wolsey gave in it that grand entertainment, at which Henry VIII. fell in love with Anna Boleyn. The

panels and pillars of the wainscot were of black oak, most elaborately and richly carved by a Gothic chisel. The walls were hung with arras worked out with scriptural subjects, and with a force and beauty almost equal to the cartoons of the Flemish painters from which they were taken. The arms of the cardinal still emblazoned the panes of the deep Gothic windows, and shed a rainbow lustre on the tessellated pavement. The roof was carved with a richness and multiplicity of design which amazed the eye with its beauty and intricacy, and the fanciful caprice of Charles I. had crowded almost every foot of surface with allegorical paintings by some of his favourite artists.

The furniture, though somewhat used and worn, corresponded in monkish magnificence with all around. The buffets, whence the cardinal's pages were wont to distribute wine and spices to his select guests, were covered with rich plate; the chairs were of carved ebony gilt, and the drapery of the tables and curtains were of purple velvet, embroidered in tarnished gold with the mingled roses and luces of Bluff Harry.

The most modern part of the chamber was that in which the court was principally gathered around the sovereign. It was raised by a few steps from the hall, and formed in itself a large circular room, richly hung with crimson velvet. There was a vast fire of cedar-wood burning in a grate of the

most beautiful workmanship in gilt bronze; and, with his back turned to a large illuminated window, in a kind of mist of many-coloured lights, sat the king and his queen, Katherine of Braganza, in gilded chairs of state. He alone wore a hat, which was looped with diamonds, and set rakishly on his head, half aside.

The Queen, a little dark vivacious brunette, attired in the glitter and splendour of a southern toilet, had her hand upon the king's chair, and lounged easily on the velvet cushions behind her. A great number of ladies and nobles stood around in circles, leaning in various attitudes against the carved oak-work, or standing bolt upright, as weariness or etiquette prevailed. The glittering partisans of the yeomen of the guard, who lined the staircase and lower hall, completed the magnificent array with a fringe of spears.

Mervyn's eye glanced listlessly from the king to the window near which he sat, and which commanded a curious view of the river and landscape on the opposite shore, through the stained glass, which gave it a thousand unnatural hues. His gaze returned, without any effort of will, to the grandees surrounding the king. Among these he recognised Shaftesbury, Monmouth, Russell, Howard, and Essex—unwonted forms in the court of Charles II. But the result projected by the real authors of the Oatesian plot had come to pass—the

popular faction was in power. Buckingham and Rochester stood behind the king's chair, and leaning against the fireplace, stood a tall young man with a remarkably haughty and sparkling expression of countenance, in conversation with an ancient nobleman, whose rich dress and lofty manner betokened the highest rank. These were the chivalrous Earl of Ossory, and his father the Duke of Ormonde.

Mervyn looked at these glittering men with a strange feeling of contempt and bursting grief, for it seemed as if all this state and pride were assumed in mockery of his desperate misery. But suddenly his eye fell on a group which seemed by an electric shock to rekindle all those feelings which were dead and paralyzed by the despair in his heart. The queen's maids of honour stood clustering around her, timid and fresh as just blossoming roses, and among these was Aurora Sydney. She looked pale, but exceedingly beautiful, and her eye, full of wonder and sorrow, seemed to glance at Mervyn; and then it was for the first time that he recollected he was standing in the torn rags of a female garb, covered with gore, mud, and filth of every description, and the hot blood rushed to his pallid cheeks. It was but a moment's feeling, however, for he grew calm and pale as before, with his eyes fixed sullenly on the ground.

The entrance of the prisoners had excited uni-

versal attention. All eyes were fixed upon them with eager curiosity, even those of the king himself. Blood seemed in no wise daunted; he glanced boldly around, his eye meeting and dwelling for a moment almost scornfully on that of Ormonde. He nodded and looked with a slight curling smile at the Duke of Buckingham, who smiled too, but almost imperceptibly.

"Why, gad-a-mercy! he stands as stiff as a saint in stone!" exclaimed the king, after a moment's silence. "One would think he were some brave deserver come to receive the reward of good deeds—and in truth the times are such that they who filch the jewels from our crown must be rewarded by our own hand for the state-thievery.—Well, colonel, you have done for yourself what none of your enemies could do for you, and bold as your former villanies have been, this last beats them all!"

"Please you, sire, I was not born to be petty, either in good or evil," replied Blood, with resolute composure.

"None but crimes of a great magnitude content the grandeur of his soul," said Rochester, smiling. "Had you stolen the crown to wear it, Blood, you were now a hero—but only to pick the jewels out—fie, fie!"

"Faith, man, thou wouldst have found it heavier wear than a foolscap," said Charles. "But what

beslattered damsel is this thou hast provided thyself withal to share thy tedious hours to the gallows?"

"I would advise your majesty not to send her among your maids-of-honour, lest she turn out a very Achilles in petticoats," said Rochester. "By'r lady, I do believe 'tis the young rogue, Ichabod, whom we—I mean it is a boy in female garb, like one of your father's actresses."

"Is it even so, sirrah?" said Charles, sharply.

"Put him to my Lord Rochester's experiment, and your majesty may decide," said merry Mistress Gwyn, with a wink which set the king and the whole court laughing.

Mervyn folded his arms, and tears rushed without restraint down his begrimed visage.

"Alas! poor youth, he is wounded!" said Mistress Sydney, as if involuntarily, and clasping her delicate hands.

"Ah! sweet Sydney, at your lackadaisies for such a graceless young sweep already?" said Charles, throwing his head back so as to stare at the young maid-of-honour full in the face. Then with a smile at the blush he extorted by the length and eagerness of this gaze, he turned to Blood. "So, colonel, this is your son, and a hopeful pupil in your noble school?"

"He is my son, sire, but as innocent of all offence as a new created angel!" exclaimed Blood, vehe-

mently. "Deal with me as you will, but I swear to your majesty the youth is innocent even of the thought of wrong!"

"He appears in likely company to be so, Colonel Blood," said the Duke of Ormonde, calmly.

"He appears in company of a man who, had not your grace's fortune been better than your deserts, had hanged you at Tyburn like a common malefactor," replied Blood, with extraordinary daring and fierceness.

"What, thou branded villain! darest thou boast of thy crimes even in this presence?" exclaimed the Earl of Ossory, starting from his leaning position.

"Ay, in the presence of the king of kings!" shouted Blood. "It was a just, valorous, and necessary deed!"

"Nought but *this* presence, nathless, hinders me from hacking thee to pieces, thou monstrous epitome of every villany," said Ossory, sparkling with rage.

"You may say so safely, my lord—I am *bound* to hear you!" said Blood, lifting his chains with a scornful smile.

"My liege!" exclaimed Ossory, turning passionately to the king—"you did promise me the garter for my late poor services; but on my knees I beseech you to grant me no other recompence but to set this monster and my self, sword to sword, in a barred room, and if I do not my father justice let men swear that *he* did!"

"I nothing doubt your courage, Ossory," said the king, quietly; "it has been proved, as you well remind us; but when we peril your gallant life it shall be in a nobler cause."

The Earl of Ossory bowed reverentially, and seemed to calm down like a high-mettled charger gently patted.

"Well then, Colonel Blood, you do not disavow your share in carrying off my Lord of Ormonde?" continued Charles. "An it had been a fair dame now I could have understood an Irish reason in it; but an ancient gentleman, covered with honour and gray hairs!—"

"I confess it all, my liege, regretting only that I failed," said Blood, firmly.

"Who were your associates, murtherer?—your prompters?" said Ossory, eagerly. "Name them, and by Heaven, I will forgive your own miserable share, for I blame not the ruffian's tool, but his hand!"

The Duke of Buckingham coloured slightly, and looked uneasily at Blood, who reassured him with an emphatic glance.

"My lord," he said, calmly, "I will never betray a friend's life, nor ever deny a deed of my doing, to preserve my own!"

"Marry, and what offence had I given your most excellent judge, jury, and executionership?" said the Duke of Ormonde.

"Like Aristides, you offended by your justice," said Charles, with a smile. "An uncommon crime in these days, and therefore craving an uncommon chastisement."

"Your grace wronged me—wronged me in blood and estate," replied Blood. "You robbed me of my property and hanged my brother. His blood was wrongfully spilt, and therefore I avenged it."

"Thou liest, villain!" exclaimed Ossory. "It was the laws, and not my father, stripped your treason bare, and hanged half your kindred, and should yourself!"

"I have flown at higher game than any Butler, for as high as you deem yourselves, Earl of Ossory!" replied Blood, fiercely; "I do avow that I have been engaged in a design to kill your majesty. A man can die but once—but I would have a nobler cause than pinching a Butler too hard!"

"What, Blood!" exclaimed Shaftesbury, with some agitation. "Is it possible that such a good protestant could have been engaged in the late execrable plot?"

"There are protestant as well as catholic plots, my Lord Shaftesbury," replied the colonel.

"We nothing doubt it, Blood," said Charles, with a bitter smile. "But give us some hooks to hang our belief on—the how and the where?"

"I was engaged to shoot your majesty with my

carbine, from out the reeds at Battersea, whither your majesty oft resorted to bathe," replied the colonel.

"Gad's life!—and for what most excellent reason?" said the king, looking keenly at Shaftesbury.

"Your majesty's severity over the consciences of the godly, your oppression of religious meetings, your merciless procedure with regard to our brothers in the covenant in Scotland!" replied Blood, with a peculiarly sanctimonious twang which made all smile.

"Good truth, we are in a cleft stick!" exclaimed Charles. "Protestant and papist—tiger and crocodile—awaiting us on either hand!—the Scylla and Charybdis of our state. Did you think to make black-puddings of me? But we have heard you are a good marksman, Blood—how came it we reddened not a stag-bullet in Battersea-fields?"

"Sire," replied the colonel with ready wit, "as oft as I took my stand in the reeds, and had your majesty as completely in my aim as a grazing deer, I was struck with such awe and religious terror of your kingly person, that I did not only desist from the enterprise myself, but persuaded others, my associates, at the nigh hazard of my life."

"We are bound to you for the capacity of still eating and drinking, friend," said Charles, carelessly playing with his jewelled George and Dragon.

"You are a second father to us, since we owe you our life—in fact more, because not by chance, but voluntary goodness."

"After such a confession, methinks the nicest law would excuse a sudden riddance of such a villain!" said Ossory, passionately.

"My good lord," replied Blood, calmly, "the law is not in your hands here, as it was in Ireland, when I fell into them. I demand a trial—and let those tremble who have cause to fear what I can divulge."

And his fierce eye glanced rapidly from the king to Buckingham and Shaftesbury.

"Well, sir, what can you do?" said Charles, biting his nether lip, and affecting to slap the queen's little brown bejewelled hand playfully from his chair.

"Let the law do its worst!" replied Blood; "I expect its utmost rigour, and am, without much concern for mine own part, prepared to submit to its decrees. But the matter cannot be of the like indifference to your majesty; for I am one of a colleagued band of the desperatest conspirators that ever were, who have all sworn to avenge the death of any one that might fall, in the blood of all who are instrumental to it; and thereupon we have drunk of each other's heart's tide! Wherefore not only your majesty's ministers, but your own royal person, are in dire and certain risk. But on the

contrary, if the gracious dews of your mercy fell on a few, it would touch the hearts of many, and produce a golden harvest of gratitude! We that have been so bold in hate—that have dared so much against your majesty's vast power—what would we not do backed by it in love?"

"You talk, colonel, as if you were lord general of the fanatics, and had all their names on your muster-rolls," said Monmouth, sternly.

"Marry, and who but Colonel Blood!" replied the worthy. "Send me to Tyburn, and see if ye win more applause from the commons than ye did by hanging the bones of old Noll on a gibbet! There was ne'er a courtier of ye all but trembled to hear his iron old skeleton creak and groan on the tree!"

"That was a sight to take the heart out of ambition," said Charles, leisurely crossing his legs. "Marry, to think of Worcester, and look on that old rotten carcass of mortality, that poisoned the very air it once half ruled! But, sirs, if this be true, it is a matter to be looked into. We would fain, if such might be, put a muzzle on the saints, for we stand in as great awe of them as of the papists, good sooth!"

"'Tis notorious the colonel hath a boundless influence over that turbulent imprisoned wind of faction, which threatens every day to make a new earthquake," said Buckingham; and observing that

the king turned eagerly, he added, "and if, sire, my advice as a privy councillor availed aught, I would beseech your majesty to show him mercy."

"Please you, my liege," said Sir John Robinson, whom until this moment Mervyn had not noticed, though he was close beside him—"Please you, Captain Edwards, the keeper's son, is waiting without, to give his evidence."

"Admit him; we would fain hear this strange story at length," said the king, and the chamberlain gave a signal.

The door of the presence-chamber opened instantly, and honest Edwards, still in his smart seagarb, as a buccaneer captain, entered. He looked boldly round, whipped his hat under his arm, and elbowing his way through the velvet courtiers about, came almost to the king's chair. The chamberlain admonished him to kneel, and kiss his majesty's hand.

"Dammee, why should I kneel?—I don't come a begging," replied Edwards, with blunt simplicity, and the king with a good-humoured smile, extended his hand and shook the sailor's heartily.

"I see thou art of Cromwell's seaworthy school," he said with a smile, "so never *fâche* thy skull-piece, good briny, with court etiquette—here is your king's hand; he is glad to see an honest face in his court."

"Why, I don't pretend to know much about

politics, please your grace," said honest Edwards, indignant at the titter which ran around; "but this I do know—in old Noll's time the Dutch never showed their noses at Chatham-yards, and folks never jumped up from dinner to hear their cannon at Temple-bar."

"Thou art right, man, thou art right," said Charles, somewhat gloomily. "But now tell us by what process you gained that bloody costard—and how fares your father? Is his wound dangerous?"

"Not as I hear on, sir," said Edwards, scratching his head. "I arn't a good un at a speech—none of your parliament men—but if so be a plain tale can serve a plain man's turn, here goes."

He then delivered what was indeed a "plain unvarnished tale," but seasoned with such rough good sense and briny logic, that Charles himself applauded his way of narration.

"Well, well, your father will recover of his wound—'tis but a flea-bite," said Charles at last. "Meanwhile we will pay the nurse, and order him a hundred pounds on the instant from our privy purse—we think it hath so much in it, Danby?—bah! my Lord Shaftesbury?—If not you must beg a little of your friends, the commons. Well, what is your opinion of this strange matter, my lords?—Is the prisoner guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty, my liege, and therefore I implore your mercy for him," said Buckingham. "Innocence

only asks justice, and without offence committed, the grandest of your prerogatives is but a sound!"

"Why, then—since the offence is special to ourself," hesitated Charles, stealing a glance at Ossory—"since the man has the honour of being a good protestant—holy Oates named him with ourself and my Lord Archbishop of Canterbury as the first in the murtherous list of the popish plotters—(look to it, lieutenant, you will be in the next batch of traitors, for denying your prisoners to that blessed salvator!) since—in short—if it spoil no man's appetite for dinner, methinks we would fain exercise our prerogative towards this bold and magnanimous villain!"

"What, sire!—a villain so attainted of every crime!" exclaimed Ossory—and as he spoke, a distant bell tolled. "A villain noted as the blackest out of hell—when even now—ay, at this very moment—a noble gentleman of your royal brother's household dies a shameful death, for a few ill-scrawled letters!"

"Good troth, Coleman is going!" said Charles. "Yonder is St. Giles's bell ringing him on to Tyburn. Peace to his soul!"

"God grant it, for he is betrayed to death by murtherous perjury!" exclaimed Mervyn; Blood glanced emphatically at him, and Shaftesbury smiled uneasily.

"The Jesuits will soon follow their luckless pupil," said the king.

"I doubt they will ever bring the Provincial to the gallows," replied Buckingham. "I hear this morning that he refuses to plead to the indictment, as against the canons for an ecclesiastic to hold up his hand at a lay tribunal,—so I suppose he must be pressed to death."

"Prance's mad lies have done the matter—we must go with the stream," said Charles.

"Hath Prance confessed, my liege, hath Prance confessed?" exclaimed Mervyn, tears gushing to his eyes, and clasping his hands distractedly.

"Yes, boy, Prance hath confessed," replied Shaftesbury, sternly. "He hath confessed the particulars of that diabolic murder, how it was perpetrated by the Jesuits in Somerset House, and the murderers are all condemned save that one obstinate arch-plotter—"

"Names matter nothing," interrupted Blood, very hastily.

"I marvel who were left free in England, if all her rogues were as firmly gyved as that honest man!" said the king, with much heat. "Is it you, my Lord Shaftesbury?—Methinks I should then be a stoic king, and reign over myself alone."

At this point in the dialogue a gentleman entered and whispered something to the chamberlain,

who announced aloud that the deputation from the commons, headed by their speaker, waited his majesty's pleasure to be admitted. It was evidently expected.

"Well, sirs, we must make ready to receive our masters—though my poor ducks must lack their biscuits the longer," said the king. "They come to swear to us that the plot is a good, true, substantial plot, and no fiction of Oates and his friends, with the devil at their head—which we are bound to believe—and thereupon hang, drown, and slaughter our catholic subjects into true religion. But we will play the king for some few minutes, and tell you, Blood, that in consideration of the service you offer us—we pardon and restore you to all your forfeits—estate and life—for life without estate in England is but permission to be the football of contempt."

"Gracious king! that life is henceforth yours," said Blood, kneeling. "But for this innocent youth—"

"We pardon him too, and all your accomplices, for what we have done in mercy to you we must do in justice to them," continued Charles. "We will see Edwards and his gallant son well rewarded—"

"Nay, my liege," interrupted Rochester, "he needs none; virtue is its own reward."

The accustomed laugh, however, failed to follow

this sally, and a deep silence of astonishment weighed on all like a spell.

"What, are ye all struck dumb, like parrots in a thunder-storm?" said the king at last, in a vexed tone.

"Please your majesty, I don't want a reward if that precious rascal there's to be rewarded too!" burst out honest Edwards.

"Your majesty grants us a full and perfect pardon for all that is past?" said Blood. "As well Oates's base accusations, as that concerning my Lord Ormonde?"

Ossory interrupted the king's reply with some exclamation, but his rage was too great to allow him to proceed, and his father catching his sleeve, exclaimed, "Peace, son, and understand the times!"

Charles's brows rose and puckered, and even Buckingham looked down at the rosettes on his shoes.

"My Lord Ossory," said the king, with peculiar sternness, "Know that I expect you and your noble father to imitate my generosity, and forgive this rash man that in which he hath offended you."

"Sire," replied the Duke of Ormonde, with a calm dignity which sat well on his venerable figure, "If your majesty can forgive him the stealing of your crown, I can easily pardon him the assault on my life."

"Ossory, men quote you as an obedient son,"

said Charles. "You cannot but submit to our pleasure, backed by your father's."

"My liege, I do submit," said the earl, turning white with suppressed passion, "but with this accompanying oath, which I take in your majesty's presence, that it may be well understood I will keep it. If ever my father come to a violent end," he continued, turning fiercely on Buckingham, "I shall be at no loss to know the murderer. I shall consider you, my Lord of Bucks, the man in default of a better, and pistol you if you stood behind the king's chair!"

"It were braver done, proud Ossory, to meet me on the instant with thy sword!" retorted Buckingham, laying his hand on his own jewelled hilt.

"Peace—I do command you both, peace!" exclaimed Charles, starting up. "Where deem ye to be, insolent men? Are ye brawling in a Whitefriars brandy-shop? By Heaven, he who raises his sword in this quarrel makes me his mortal enemy! On your heads, no more of this. Lieutenant, we charge you with Colonel Blood until we can see his pardon expedited; as for the boy—"

"My liege, I charge myself with his welfare," said Monmouth, warmly, "I have some offices yet unbestowed in my army against the Scots rebels, and methinks he were well removed from the tainted air of the south."

" There is Walsingham writes you for a new cornet to his company in Dumbarton, the three last being killed before they reached him," said Charles, coldly.

" Give me that post, sire! I long to die—at least to die honourably!" said Mervyn, with a passionate flow of tears, which affected all present, and none more than Mistress Sydney, who wiped her beautiful eyes repeatedly.

" You shall have it, youth, and depart to-morrow," said Shaftesbury, very hastily. " Do you promise? to-morrow! if your wound permits?"

Mervyn bowed, but his breast swelled too full with hysteric emotion to permit him to speak.

" Arms and accoutrements and a horse I will promise you at my own expense," said Monmouth, gently. " Chiffinch, with his majesty's leave, will take you now to a surgeon, and then to procure your harness."

" Sirs, you are exceedingly good to the boy," said Charles, with a glance full of suspicion; " but look to it! I will require his blood of whosoever sheds it, be he who he may."

" Methinks your majesty does your own blood grievous wrong," said Monmouth, vehemently.

" Why, we Stuarts always had a knack of ridding ourselves of troublesome people," replied the king, sternly. " Well, Chiffinch, take the charge of the youth till to-morrow."

Chiffinch bowed profoundly, and offered his arm to Mervyn, who seemed scarce able to totter. He knelt, however, to kiss the king's hand with a deep sob, which Charles seemed to hear, for he patted his cheek encouragingly.

"Oh! my king," he exclaimed, in the bitterness of his soul; "think of me not as I seem. I will deserve your majesty's better esteem, or perish in the attempt.

As he spoke, he raised his eyes with enthusiasm upward, and he met those of Mistress Sydney, looking at him with singular feeling and attention. "And yours, blessed lady!" he added, with a fervour, which startled a blush on her fair cheek.

"You have our good wishes too, and dat of our poor persecuted church," said the queen, in pretty good English, and extending her hand to Mervyn, who kissed it and arose. At this moment, the antechamber was filled with the deputies from the commons, and Chiffinch motioned the youth to follow him. Blood made some sort of attempt to speak to him; but he drew himself rapidly past, and disappeared, without deigning him any notice whatever.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE POPISH MARTYRS.

CHIFFINCH'S first care was to lead the youth to a private apartment of his own, where he sent for a surgeon, and, meanwhile, washed the wound himself. The son of Æsculapius, however, pronounced that it was merely a flesh-wound, bandaged it, and assured him it would be well in a few days. Mervyn was by this time completely exhausted with fatigue, and, at Chiffinch's desire, lay down on a couch, where he slept for several hours uninterruptedly, and awoke refreshed in body and mind.

Chiffinch greeted him with very satisfactory news on awaking. A page from the Duke of Monmouth had arrived, to state his master's pleasure, that Mervyn should sail to join his company, in a vessel

which contained the Duke's own suite and staff, on their way to Edinburgh, and which was to sail in the evening. Meanwhile, Chiffinch had instructions to provide him with all necessaries, such as horse and armour; and, by way of earnest, brought him a complete suit of handsome ashen gray, embroidered in a glittering court style. Attired in this, after a luxurious warm-bath, the old page could not help congratulating him on his good looks, and assured him that, with a dash of military success, the ladies would find him irresistible.

They sallied forth, and directed their way to Lambeth, where the duke's armourer lived. A coat of steel lined with buff, crimson hose, and a helmet heavily laden with plumes, formed his uniform, a sword, huge pistols, and a two-edged axe his weapons. Chiffinch was apparently well furnished with money, for he paid for every thing, and selected in addition a handsome wardrobe of linen and other necessaries befitting an officer of dragoons. Finally he delivered a purse containing some money to pay his expenses to his regiment, which he said the duke had advanced on his pay.

It grew towards noonday, and they were on their way back to Whitehall, when they stopped for a moment in a court of Lambeth palace to hear a crier, who was vociferating something to a very motley collection of auditors. He had some papers, which he was selling at a halfpenny apiece, and the

title instantly attracted Mervyn's attention. "The confession of Miles Prance, the popish goldsmith, concerning the late horrid murder of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, taken in Newgate, with three justices' hands to it!"

Mervyn bought a copy, and Chiffinch, observing with a smile that he must be well able to correct the errata, walked with him up an avenue of poplars, to read it out of observation. A glance convinced him that Oates, or his party, had dictated every word. Green, Berry, and Hill, three luckless beings, of whom Mervyn had never heard, were named as the actual perpetrators of the murder—Van Huysman, certain popish priests, and by innuendo, the Duke of York, were assigned as the instigators. Mervyn himself figured as a disguised Jesuit, employed by the priest to carry a message to Godfrey, inviting him to see the Duke of York. On arriving at St. James's, it seems he found his highness ill, and was obliged to return without seeing him. The murderers, meanwhile, dogged him into St. Clement's church, where he staid to hear a godly sermon of Dr. Oates; and proceeding home, past Somerset House, wherein Prance and the conspirators were concealed, Hill went out and told him that two men were fighting within, and that he feared they would kill one another, and entreated him as a magistrate to come and part them. Godfrey unwillingly complied, and had hardly entered

ere he was seized by the murderers. The sequel of the tragedy was described much as it really happened, substituting the three accused for the actual perpetrators of the atrocious deed.

"Well, sir, and what is your opinion of this document?" said Chiffinch, not without anxiety.

"Truth and falsehood are so mingled in it, that it would puzzle Œdipus to unravel them," said Mervyn. "But I am sure this confession is extorted rather from Prance's cowardice than villany, for he is rather a weak than a bad man. The innocent blood that is to be shed on his confession shall not flow if I can prevent it. I will see him, Master Chiffinch; I am sure he dare not say before me that these lies are true."

"It would do the king good service," said the page, hesitatingly; "but you run your head against your new patrons, and perchance into a noose."

"I care not; I will venture all," said Mervyn with a shudder, as the recollection of Godfrey's last scene rushed upon him. "If I cannot bring the murderers to justice, I can at least prevent these men from adding to their victims. Will you with me, Chiffinch?"

"Not I, indeed; I will mix in none of Mr. Oates's matters," said the page, with a shrug. "But if you are bent on trying your luck, (and the king's patronage is well worth the faction's, though it triumph

for the moment,) here is the river and a sculler at hand."

Mervyn instantly hailed the boat, and in a fit of enthusiasm, which the wise in this world will have some difficulty in imagining, rowed down the river to London Bridge, where he landed, and walked to Newgate. Turning the corner of the Old Bailey, he perceived a large crowd thronging the gates of the court-house, in profound silence, as if expecting some important news. On inquiry he learned that the five Jesuits were arraigned, and that one of them refused to plead, so that the judges were deliberating on the expediency of forcing him by the PRESS.

In his hurried state of mind, Mervyn took little notice of this circumstance. He knocked at the debtor's door, which was opened instantly, as if some person was expected. Mervyn prefaced his request with a coin, and asked to see Prance, the goldsmith. The Cerberus shook his head, and asked if he had any warrant. Mervyn replied with another broad piece; then, eyeing him with a shrewd smile, the jailer said that as he saw he was a gentleman, and no harm could come of it, he did not mind if he feigned orders and admitted him.

Following his guide through the dreary corridors of the prison, they arrived at a door strongly barred and bolted, which the jailer opened, and shoving in the visiter, secured it again instantly.

A glance showed Mervyn the misery of the scene into which he had thus intruded. It was a high narrow cell, lighted by a gloomy cross-barred slit, rather than window, in the massive wall, totally destitute of furniture save a heap of straw, a blanket, a wooden platter, and a jug of water. On this heap sat poor Prance, his clothes hanging in tatters about him, his head shaven and bare, for he had taken his wig off, and was apparently searching it diligently, by way of amusement. He was heavily ironed, and his whole appearance was so wan and wobegone, that Mervyn could scarcely conceive how a few months could have made such an alteration.

The prisoner raised his eyes, and starting so that his chains clattered, replaced his wig in manifest confusion, with the tye uppermost. His appearance at this moment—the incredulous astonishment with which he extended his large dirty hand to receive that which Mervyn held out to him, was almost ludicrous but for its horrible ghastliness. It was some time, however, before he could recognise in the well-dressed melancholy-looking youth, the sprightly young attendant on Oates. When he did so, he burst into tears, and sobbed like a woman for some time, and Mervyn could not refrain from doing the like.

"Don't say any thing to me—don't, don't—I know you are innocent!" sobbed Prance. "It is

all my cursed wife and that monster, Oates!—Oh, don't reproach me."

"Not for mine own part, Prance," said Mervyn. "I heartily forgive you—reasonable doubts must exist on your mind against me. But for what relates to those innocent men—"

"Innocent they are for all that I know," interrupted the unhappy goldsmith. "But what can I do?—I must do as they bid me, or hang for it. They have tortured me till I prayed for death—screwed my thumbs nearly off—look, sir, the joints are powerless, and how am I to work at my trade if ever I get out again?—I can't be hanged, Master Mervyn—I won't be hanged!"

"You will be hanged and damned too!" said the youth, vehemently. "These villains will make you their tool first, and then hang you out of the way."

"No, no, sir!—no, no, it is impossible!" replied Prance, shaking all over in an ague of fear. "Oates has sworn to let me off if I confessed as he dictated—and I have, I have! Otherwise I should have hanged to-morrow, for Bedloe witnessed that he saw me standing over the dead body, and—"

"Why did you not confess the truth?—the truth does not criminate *you*, Prance!" said Mervyn.

"Nor save me from the rope," replied the goldsmith, desperately. "I tried it, but it would not

do—nobody believed me. I must either hang, or hang others—it is not my fault. Their blood be on the heads of my betrayers!"

"Their blood will be on your own head for ever, Prance," exclaimed Mervyn.

"I cannot help it; I will not be hanged," said the goldsmith, doggedly.

"You shall *not* be hanged, if you will retract these falsehoods, and confess the truth!" said Mervyn.

"And bring you that assurance from the duke—the duke?" exclaimed Prance. "Swear to me, Master Mervyn, that I shall be allowed to plead the king's pardon, and I will retract every thing—write myself a liar on every wall in England!"

"I cannot promise so much—I have no authority—but, Prance, have you no conscience?"

"Have I a conscience? Oh, Master Mervyn, what else keeps me in a perpetual hell of thought?—But I have a neck too," he added, with a ghastly grin, "and I will not be choked like a mad dog."

"Deserve well of the court, and I think I can promise you your pardon, and rewards too," said Mervyn.

"But—if—if I tell things as they appeared to me, I must accuse the Duke of York!" said Prance, with mingled eagerness and hesitation. "Come, come, I know you are the duke's page of the dark stairs—give me some comfort, now do!"

"Accuse no man," said Mervyn, with a somewhat Jesuitical silence on this important point, "only deny that you know aught of the matter."

"But how can I deny that I was present at the Water-gate—that dreadful night—by the Duke of York's orders?" groaned poor Prance. "Bedloe substantially accuses me thereof."

"The murtherer!" ejaculated Mervyn. "Can you not allege—are you not porter of those chambers?—might your duty have taken you there?"

"At two in the morning?" said Prance, shaking his bald skull mournfully. "If you indeed, Master Mervyn—"

"I will bear you witness—I have the king's pardon in my pocket," said Mervyn. "The truth will be apparent some day, and thereby shall we all be judged, Prance."

"I will deny my confession—I will say, as I did at first, that I know nothing of the matter," said the goldsmith in a fit of enthusiasm. "Bedloe is a liar, and one witness cannot hang me! If his majesty will be good to me, I will—I will—"

The rattle of the bolts was heard at this moment, and the turnkey entered in evident consternation. "I can't allow you to stay any longer, my master," he said, sharply. "Here is godly parson Oates a coming this way, to visit the prisoners, and make 'em confess, and it's as much as my neck's worth to let a stranger be found here."

Prance turned deadly pale and looked gaspingly at Mervyn, who, after a moment's consideration, briefly, but significantly advised him to tell the truth, and make certain that it should be of no ill-consequence to him.

Prance again burst into tears, and Mervyn left him in his dungeon, sobbing like a child.

It was too late, however, to avoid Oates, whom Mervyn now perceived coming up the corridor in canonicals, with a prayer-book open in his hand. Brother Titus did not immediately observe his young *protégé;* he was hurrying on, seemingly much disturbed by the importunities of a woman who followed him.

"Nay, but sweet, holy Mr. Oates, when will you let him out?" she was saying. "The business is going to pieces, the apprentices will not work, and what am I to do if you hang my husband? You know while we had any thing, you were always welcome to bite and sup—"

"Avoid me, sinful Eve, lest I crush ye," said Oates, stopping fiercely short. "Would you tempt me to spare whom the Lord hath devoted, and save thy miserable sinner of a husband!—Begone!"

"Master Oates, you *shall* hear me !—I will expose you, devil," exclaimed the woman. "I'll have the mob tear you into chitterlings—I will! They shall know what a hell-fiend their angel is—

though it make me the shamedest wretch that ever cast shadow in the sun!"

"Out upon thee!—an thou speak such another word, I will strike thee dumb, slanderess!" shouted Oates, clenching his fist and blackening with rage.

"Bloodhound! thou shalt not even bark, much less bite," exclaimed Mervyn, suddenly darting between them.

"So, so, young master!—a new rig-out?" muttered Oates, relaxing from his menacing attitude. "Here's a pretty premium for cutting the throats of poor protestant gentlemen!—Well, well, the House shall hear of this—forsooth, a gentleman!—what do you charge per throat?"

"I would do your's for nothing and this instant, but for better reasons than any you can offer, Master Oates," said Mervyn. "But that time is to come—at present go your ways, but dare not even to eye this woman threateningly."

"In God's name, you are welcome to the slut and her clamorous tongue," said Oates, with a laugh.

"Dear young gentleman, what must I do?—he will hang my husband!" sobbed Mrs. Prance.

"You have sold yourself to the fiend incarnate, woman," said Mervyn, sternly, "and all you can do to extricate your soul from his lime-twigs is to join your husband in telling the truth."

"Hast thou been tampering with my prisoners!" exclaimed Oates. "I must see to this, good sooth," and he set off hastily, pursued by Mrs. Prance.

He paused, however, a few paces off, as if to secure his person, and turning with a most fiendish leer, "Since you have visited my friends, go visit your own," he said. "Your patron and master, Van Huysman, is in the press-yard, waiting the judge's warrant to be crushed into a jelly!" He then moved hastily off.

"Van Huysman!" repeated Mervyn, aghast. "What does he mean?"

"Wiseman or Housman, or some such name, sir," replied the jailer. "It's the Jesuit provincial as is to be pressed to death, because he won't plead to the 'dictment."

"Van Huysman!" echoed the youth. "It is impossible."

"Wot's impossible, sir?" said the jailer, with evident curiosity. "Why, you can see him if you thinks proper, and will stand a little garnish—it's the prettiest sight as has been in the gate these ten years."

Mervyn had only power to nod to him to lead the way, and followed with a heart labouring almost to suffocation.

A few turns brought them to a flight of stone steps, by which they entered the press-yard. It was a large quadrangle, the size of which was much di-

minished by the high walls of the prison, set with gloomy barred windows, which cribbed it in on every side. All these windows were occupied by ghastly looking beings, roused from the torpor of despair by the expectation of a sight; some even held themselves up at the bars with their chained hands. The yard was filled with a motley throng of prisoners, ragged, squalid, and brutal with disease and crime, who were separated from a group at the end of the court by a chain drawn across. The jailer desired Mervyn to take a stand on a block of stone which seemed once to have been a whipping-post, whence he could obtain a good view of the exhibition, and he mechanically obeyed.

Some of the persons of the group before him Mervyn recognised without the loquacious help of his cicerone. The two sheriffs, Bethel and Cornish, were there, and a personage whom he concluded to be the executioner. He was a tall reckless-looking ruffian, clad in leathern hose, and a doublet of untanned bullskin worn with the hair out. Mervyn's rapid eye found not, however, the object it sought in terrible uncertainty; but it was evident that some strange deed was in progress. The sheriffs whispered each other mysteriously, and there was a hush among the wild denizens, ominous as the silence of the woods on an overcast noonday. It was a bright morning, but only a glaring blue square of sky was visible from the yard, lit by an unseen sun,

and as Mervyn looked upward he imagined he was in some wildering dream.

In a few minutes he saw Oates make his appearance near the sheriffs, and look around. Their eyes met, and Oates seemed to address some observation to Bethel concerning him; but his attention was almost instantly attracted and fixed elsewhere. A massive door in front suddenly rolled open, and a man with a mace and open parchment, made his appearance, followed by some soldiers with their partisans fixed. In the midst of this warlike array walked a tall figure with his arms folded, perfectly pale, but serene, and wearing a long black mantle in a monastic style. Mervyn could not mistake him —it was Van Huysman.

For some minutes after this appalling recognition, Mervyn stood rooted to the ground, without the power of speech. Meanwhile the crier, for such the maceman seemed to be, after the long nasal "O yes, O yes!" yelled forth the usual proclamation in the king's name. This document announced that the prisoner, having refused to plead, was ordered to be put in a press, with as much iron and stone upon him as he could bear, and more; that the first day he should have three morsels of barley bread, and the next day he might drink thrice of the channel-water, but of no spring or fountain; and that this should be his punishment till he died.

A murmur of horror ran through the crowd, and

there was a rush to obtain a view of the prisoner; but he did not seem at all moved. The crier then handed his parchment to Bethel, who took it—and there was a deathly silence.

"Master Housman," said Bethel at last, in a faltering tone, "you see, here is my warrant; you have heard it read. I do beseech you have some compassion on yourself, and spare the eyes of Christian men a horrid sight! I do implore you, plead!"

"Not so, Master Sheriff," replied Van Huysman. "By no deed of mine will I acknowledge the infamous and bloody tribunal, at which you summon me to plead, only to murder me with forms of law."

"Then must we put the dreadful sentence in force, which but to hear makes our flesh to creep!" said Bethel.

"The will of my Master be done!" replied the ecclesiastic, looking calmly upward. "I am here to bear witness, with my blood, to the truth—the way is thorny but it leads to Heaven!—dark and terrible the gate, but it opens on eternal light and peace!"

"Rather on eternal damnation!—perishing soul and body in thy idolatrous misbelief!" exclaimed Cornish.

"Eternity is before me—I am about to stake ETERNITY on the faith which is within me," replied the prisoner, calmly.

"Mauster Rector, I am here in a Christian spirit,

to exhort you not to waste both soul and body," said Oates. "Be not as burned wood on the waters, but repent your sins, and—"

"Good brother Titus, peace," interrupted the priest. "You have betrayed me to this pass—but confine your zeal to the laceration of my body—and know that the sin which weighs heaviest on my conscience at this moment is my preserval of thy life in the forest of Clairvaux."

"Presarval! fine presarval, forsooth!" exclaimed Oates. "Presarval, says he, to keep me afterwards on bread and water—make me meal by myself like one plague-struck—call me spy, cell me like a lunatic, have me hissed for a liar—"

"Peace, Dr. Oates; this is scarce decent," said Bethel, sharply. "Heaven forbid you should force me, Master Housman, to do my warrant—but if it must be—time draws on. Have you no friends whom you would bid farewell to?"

"Few, and those distant," replied Van Huysman. "But there are some who love me above these tranquil Heavens, who are wreathing for these temples, all unworthy as they seem to you, the evergreen wreath of martyrdom! I am ready."

"Father," exclaimed a suffocated voice behind, and the Jesuit, starting round, received Mervyn in his extended arms.

"Nay, the most loved is nearest," he said, clutching the youth to his breast, and suffering him to

weep in a paroxysm of grief, for some moments, during which all kept a deep silence, but he shed no tear himself.

"My son," he said at last, gently loosening the youth's embrace, "you have yielded sufficiently to the weakness of humanity, show now its strength. This is well; thou art arrived to witness how a catholic soldier of the cross lays down his armour, the battle being fought, and sunset come."

"Father! you do not, you cannot mean to rush madly on this terrible death!" exclaimed Mervyn.

"Not madly, but most rationally, Mervyn," said the priest, calmly. "Death is the porter of Paradise! Who would prefer the aches and terrors of this life to death, if he felt as I do—that the shores of Heaven bound the dark billows of the future? Would you have me give the lie to my whole existence? Where were now the religion of God, had Paul's heart failed for torture or for death? My resolution is fixed as the Alps. I am here to die for Him who died for all mankind."

"Come, come, Master Jesuit, we must have no more of your popish gabble," interrupted Oates. "Mr. Sheriff, there are precious though guilty souls around, and we must not suffer them to be corrupted, lest putting dry wood in the fire, it—"

"Villain!—nay, I am sorry to have spoken such a word at such a pass," said the priest, slightly

kindling. "I would leave this earth without animosity against any man, but I bid thee remember! —these are thy high and palmy days, in which thou flauntest with all thy branches at Heaven, saying to the winds, 'I am eternal!' But the lightnings of God will descend upon thee yet, wither thy pride, tear up thy roots, and make thy topmost verdure the hiding place of snakes and reptiles!"

"Look'ye, Master Sheriff, see you how the court-springald eyes me?—the decoy-page!" said Oates, drawing back less from this outburst than from the fierce expression in Mervyn's countenance. "I doubt me, some paupish rescue is intended. Look to it, Master Bethel!"

"Guards, draw near," exclaimed Cornish, in great alarm.

"Nay, nay, Brother Cornish, I think they be only the squalid wretches of the prison about us, for the most part in chains," said Bethel. "Let the prisoner say what he will—he can do them no harm. They cannot be damned deeper."

"But they may be saved!" said Huysman, with a mild glance at the haggard masses. "Hear me, my brothers!—I am come to die, and if ever men speak truth, it is at such a moment——"

"'Slife, gentlemen, do not hear the popish villain!" exclaimed Oates.

"No popery! no popery!" yelled the crowd, and a confused uproar followed, which was only silencde

by the still louder voice of Cornish. "Silence, fellows, rogues, vagabonds!—let us do our duty!" he shouted. "Come, Master Jesuist, we have no time to lose. The justices want to dine, and they cannot leave court till we bring word the prisoner will not plead."

"True, brother—his time of grace is over," said Bethel, hastily. "Come, sir, are you ready?"

"Be not so eager of blood, sirs, lest it be meted to you in your own measure," said Van Huysman, calmly. "I am ready; but first I would fain address a few words to these wanderers from the fold, and bid farewell to this child of my heart."

"H'are it comes—a fine popish sarmon in Newgate!" said Oates.

"Our warrant gives no authority for such scandalous pratings," said Cornish. "Speed, speed!—Mr. Recorder Jefferies hath so endorsed it."

"Patience awhile in the name of mercy!" exclaimed Mervyn, wildly. "Delay but an hour—one little hour—and in that time I doubt not to obtain his majesty's stay on these diabolical proceedings!"

"Doubtless, doubtless!" said Cornish, laughing sardonically. "What, does the young traitor accuse his majesty of popish leanings?"

"My son," said the priest, tenderly; "my dear son, recollect yourself! The die is cast—the bitterness of death is over. What canst thou do? Be patient, child, and I will yet sow seeds which shall bloom in Paradise!"

"I can do much, if I had but a gasp of time," said Mervyn. "I am in the king's service. Grant me but one hour, one half-hour, gentlemen, and I doubt not the king shall take some order which shall spare the horror of this judicial murder!"

"We have no right—no privilege—to disobey the orders of his maujesty's loard chaife justaice!" said Oates. "The sheriffs do so under an enormous forfeit to the king; and I know not that either of you, my masters, is so in the court sunshine as to escape any punishment it can inflict."

"For my part I will do my duty, whatever comes of it—though it were against my natural blood," said the harsh fanatic, Cornish.

"You hear, Mervyn," said the Jesuit, placidly "Stand not between me and the glorious sun of bliss that never sets. In an hour—nay, weep not, child—in an hour, this tortured spirit will rest for ever in the bosom of its God. It is a rough and steep ascent to heaven, but did our blessed master tread a softer?"

"Come, despatch, despatch!" exclaimed Cornish.

"You are eager, sir," said Van Huysman. "Look to it!—the wheel of fortune is never at a stand, and its whirl may crush you too. You have a traitor's heart—and may find a traitor's doom."

"Father, if ever you have loved me, hear me!" said Mervyn, passionately. "Plead to this tyrannous indictment! Your life, not your death, is

needed by the church! Consent to plead, and I will wring your pardon from the king, or die at his feet!"

"It is too late, my fine young gallant, sentence is pronounced," said Oates. "He has rejected marcy, and my lords and judges—no, nor the king himself—cannot revoke the punishment."

"You lie, murderer, you lie!—the king can pardon even at the block!" shouted Mervyn. "He shall plead his majesty's pardon, he shall, I swear it."

"No, my son, the king dares not pardon me," said Van Huysman. "The surges of faction run too high to save a single plank from the wreck. Besides, these gentlemen are in a hurry. How long, brother," he said, turning to the executioner—"how long does it take a man to die in the press?"

"Why, sir, that depends on the weight, and how it's put, and whether *the indulgence* is granted," replied Jack, scratching his bull-like head. "That same is a pointed piece of timber under the back, or pulling the sharp corner of the press on the heart, and then its done in about ten minutes or a quarter—but some have been known to live out a day—I never knowed one that needed any thing the second though."

"I cannot claim any such indulgence of messieurs the sheriffs, I am afraid," said Van Huysman with a quaint sad smile.

"No indulgence!" shouted Cornish. "Come, brother Bethel."

"I pray God, Master Cornish, that your last moments be not so hurried," said Van Huysman. Then turning calmly to the executioner, he said, "What is necessary to be done, brother?"

"Brother by Eve's side!—but that's the surer," replied that official, with a grin. "Why, sir, an't please you, you need only strip as naked as you were born."

"I trust you will allow me to die with decency, sirs," said the priest, with some emotion.

"Nay, 'tis enough if he strips to waistcoat and drawers," said Bethel, with a doubtful glance at his ferocious yoke fellow. "Ay, ay, that will do I think, Cornish?"

"Then I need only remove mine habit," said Van Huysman, unfastening a rope-girdle which he wore. "I forgive mine enemies; but they made me wear this at the bar to excite a deadlier prejudice. Brother, I will not detain you long."

"I an't in no hurry, sir," said Jack Ketch, politely. "But I hope you'll remember me. It's hard work, and I know a trick or two to make a gentleman's death come easy."

"I have always paid my debts, and am persuaded none ever deserved so much from my hands as thou wilt do to-day, friend," said Van Huysman with a

smile, and he put several pieces of gold in the executioner's hand.

"Why, sir, though I say it that shouldn't," rejoined the man, greatly mollified with this present, "I always strives to do my duty to the satisfaction of all parties, and if their honours will let me, I'll put the bolt right over your fifth rib. I warrant you won't be long a-kicking."

He then, with officious zeal, aided the priest to strip off his mantle, which, after examining with the cautious eye of a Jew clothesman, he folded up as his perquisite.

Mervyn stood petrified with horror beside his doomed patron; even the mob were breathless with expectation, and curiosity painted itself in fearful characters on those wan, diseased, melancholy, or ferocious countenances, those haggard, gazing eyes, and gaping mouths.

Van Huysman proceeded to unbutton his vest, when he paused and turned to the mob, in a manner which irresistibly swayed them to attention.

"Brethren," he said, with awful solemnity of tone, "you see me here;—I am here to die. In a few short minutes this living, breathing form, will be senseless clay. I trust you will hear me speak a few words, for few they shall be. If I have sinned—"

"Come, Mr. Housman, we cannot listen to this," interrupted Cornish.

"Well, I have done, sir," said Van Huysman, calmly. "The plougher's office is not the reaper's. I leave my forgiveness and blessing on all mankind —even on thee, Oates. And now I have done with life, except to bid thee farewell, my son—farewell, but *not* for ever!"

He turned to Mervyn, who sobbed convulsively. "Come hither, child," he said in a moved tone, and sinking his voice almost to a whisper, he added— "thou art entered into a good service—of a king, who is a catholic at heart. Some day thy sword may be needed. I charge thee wear it ready in the sheath! I would fain confide to thee a secret, but this is neither the time nor the place. Know only that this locket contains the portrait of thy mother —a woman whose falsehood has imbittered my whole existence. Bury it with me."

Van Huysman slipped a small gold locket into his hand, and then with calm courage removed his gabardine, and some other articles of his upper dress. When these were removed, a shirt of horsehair appeared, and the marks of flagellation deeply set in the flesh. A murmur of surprise ran among all present. There was a finely carved crucifix of ebony tied to his breast, which he broke off and gave to Mervyn. He was now undressed to the state which Bethel's humanity had suggested.

"Are you ready, sir?" said the executioner.

"Let me bless thee for the last time and for ever!"

said the Jesuit, turning to Mervyn, who was sobbing bitterly, and he knelt while Van Huysman blessed him in the solemn language of his church. But as he proceeded his voice grew broken, and yielding apparently to an overpowering feeling, he raised the youth in his arms, and they mingled tears for some moments in silence. Even the ruffianly mob were affected, and many of the women burst into sobs and tears.

"Gock! what is this? Come, Master Cornish, let us have no more of this popish mummery!" said Oates.

"No—no more!" echoed Cornish.

"Come, good sir, we must not delay," said Bethel, in a mild and even sorrowful tone.

"True, true—I am ready," replied the Jesuit; he then kissed Mervyn's forehead, and gently unlocked his embrace.

"But I doubt if you are, my master," said Oates; "the law says he shall be laid on his back with body bare—"

"Nay, come, Mr. Oates, we will not strain a point that way," said Bethel; "you are ready, sir?"

"Yea, for all things my Master ordains," replied the priest. "My son, withdraw; your grief is my only vulnerable point," added he, tenderly. "Sirs, I am ready."

"Come along then; I am sure I am tired of waiting," said Oates; the fatal procession then began its march.

CHAPTER XX.

WHITEHALL AND NEWGATE.

"THIS way, this way, sir," said the executioner, unbarring a door which revealed a flight of steps leading to the dungeon where the press was kept. There was a general murmur of curiosity and horror. The sheriffs, each carrying a link, entered first, the prisoner followed, and then Mervyn, who would not leave him.

The prisoner seemed to give one last and somewhat lingering look on the light that was leaving his eyes for ever, and then walked into the dungeon.

For some moments the eye could discern no objects, so deep was the gloom, for daylight never entered this choicest haunt of horror. The sheriffs, however, raised their torches, and the awful scene became visible. It was a cell apparently about twenty

feet square, with bare stone walls dripping with the sweat of ages. In the centre of the brick floor stood the tremendous engine of judicial barbarity. It was of a very simple apparatus, consisting merely of a rough-hewn tree, four huge rings and ropes to stretch the limbs on, and pulleys to raise the enormous mass of iron destined by the law to force the truth out of its victims. Mervyn gazed at these direful preparations in a state of dreamy horror, and perceived a lean gaunt figure crouching at a charcoal brazier, whose small twinkling eyes were fixed on him.

"What villanous fellow have we here?" said Cornish, interrupting Van Huysman, who had now knelt, and was praying aloud in Latin.

"You call him well—'tis Elkanah, the Jewish dog of a poisoner," said Bethel.

"What business has he here?" continued the surly sheriff.

"Only curiosity, I suppose," said Oates. "He is in pursuit of the elixir of life, and likes to see people die; 'tis a study."

"Only curiosity, curiosity, my lord!" said the Jew, clasping his hands with intense eagerness, as if afraid of being debarred from the satisfaction he anticipated.

"The elixir of life?" said Bethel. "Is the man mad? An it were the great art of alchemy now, there were some reason in it. Hast any skill in that, Jew?"

"Something, a little; Oh, if I could but live six months longer it should be seen!" said the Jew, with a cunning rat-like glance at the miserly sheriff.

"Good sooth, he must be hanged next sessions for a rare gift in hastening a man's inheritance," said Oates, with a laugh. "But in truth, the man hath a wondrous science in alchemy, Master Bethel. It were worth while to pack a jury, and save him for your own use."

"Fie, fie, doctor!" said Bethel, but somewhat thoughtfully.

Van Huysman had now concluded his prayer, and arose perfectly tranquil. "I have one word more to say, my son," he said. "I am bound not to reveal your real parentage, but I swear to you, Blood is not your father. Padre Oliva alone has the power to tell you all."

He then resigned himself quietly to the executioner. By his directions he laid down on the timber, and the executioner stretched his arms as far as possible, fastening them securely to the rings. The same operation was tried on his feet, but his limbs were too long, and it was found necessary to tie them above the ankle.

"Courage, Mervyn!" said the victim, when all was prepared; "comfort me with the cross and pray for me. Good brother, let not the weight fall till I pronounce the name of the Saviour thrice!"

He then seemed to pray again, for his lips moved

audibly. But Mervyn's anguish had now regained the agony of consciousness. He threw himself in supplication at the feet of Bethel, imploring him for one hour—but one hour! The sheriff was inexorable, though he wept. The idea of the thousand marks forfeit to the king overpowered every other consideration.

"Are you ready now, sir?" said the executioner. "Yes, I am ready," replied Van Huysman, steadily. "Forget me not, my son! *In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in eternum!* Pray for me, Mervyn! for ever, on earth, farewell!"

He then paused for a moment as if collecting all his strength, and closing his eyes with a slight convulsive shiver, pronounced that best of names, invoking which so much evil has been wrought in the world. "Jesu—Jesu—Jesu!"

The machinery was instantly in motion, and an enormous mass of iron appeared slowly descending on the breast of the victim. Mervyn made a frantic effort to rush forward, but Cornish caught him in his sinewy clutch.

There was a deep deathly silence. A thrill of horror ran through all present, and Bethel sobbed, but not a muscle of the condemned stirred. He opened his eyes indeed, and fixed them steadily on the deadly machine as it wavered and descended slowly down. His face, however, flushed once almost crimson, and then grew white as stone.

"Wretches! I command you, in the king's name, forbear!" groaned Mervyn, desperately.

"Bring us a warrant then!" exclaimed Bethel. "Away to Whitehall, if you have the power you boast—my horse is at the gate."

"Father, I go! I will save you!" he shouted, handing the cross to Bethel. "Good, charitable man! only delay the execution for ten minutes!"

"I will, I will!" said Bethel. "Cornish, this is too horrible!"

Van Huysman raised his eyes mournfully, but Mervyn had disappeared with the rapidity of lightning. He rushed with frantic speed to the debtors-gate, where he found Bethel's horse, a wretched hack, waiting under charge of a ragged boy, to whose great surprise, he instantly leaped into the saddle, and galloped off at a rate which soon left the urchin's shouts out of hearing. He rode as if the salvation of the whole human race had depended on his speed, heeding not the crowded state of the thoroughfares through which he passed like a phantom rider. People stopped to gaze after and wonder at his speed, but he noted no cry, no angry expostulation, and his horse, conscious of a wild rider, rushed rather than galloped, till man and steed arrived breathless at Whitehall.

He threw himself from the foaming animal, learned that the king was in the great gallery of the palace,

and that Chiffinch was in attendance. He found the old page in the ante-chamber of the gallery, with a music master, from whom he was learning the viol.

"Chiffinch, I must see the king," he exclaimed, wildly.

"Must you indeed? It will be against his majesty's express commands then," replied Chiffinch, resuming his instrument rather scornfully. "He is playing at tables with Madame Gwyn."

"My business is of life and death!" exclaimed Mervyn, and struck with his tone, the page again looked up.

"What ails the youth?" exclaimed he, letting his viol fall.

"A moment may be life or death, dear Chiffinch," said Mervyn, wildly. "I will explain it all after."

"Pass on then; I'll not hinder you," said Chiffinch; and in a moment Mervyn darted into the gallery and threw himself at the king's feet, as he sat playing at chess with Nell Gwyn, and at a propitious instant, for the king and his buxom partner were laughing till the tears came in their eyes, at some jest of Buckingham's. This sudden apparition, however, checked the tide of the royal mirth.—"Od's bodkins! what have we here?" exclaimed Charles. "What, man, turned beggar already?"

"Yes, sire, a beggar for a life!" replied Mervyn, wildly. "Your merciless judges have revived a

dead law to slay a man who has been my more than father. Van Huysman will not plead, and they are going to press him to death."

"Heyday, what is it, child?" said Mistress Gwyn. "The Jesuit provincial—Oh, that is my Lady Portsmouth's business—I am the Protestant—I know what!"

And Nell and the king burst into a loud laugh.

"Sire, in the name of justice, of mercy!"

"Pooh, man, they have no influence at court—had you asked in the name of faction now!—in short, I dare not save the man."

"But he is innocent, sire—I swear it—innocent!"

"I believe him so—Nell, it is your move—as I do all the victims of this accursed plot!" said Charles, hastily. "He had better be guilty on the other side. The tide runs too furiously for a straw of the prerogative. The Jesuit must die—but I may avenge him some day!—Nell, I have you now."

"And as long as your majesty pleases to keep me, if my lord treasurer can afford it?" said Nell, with a sly glance at Shaftesbury, who was standing behind the king.

"My liege, you do reject my prayer then, for delay is equal to rejection," said Mervyn, vehemently.

"The obstinate old fool!—I sent him word last night to plead, but he must play the martyr to an

unbelieving generation," said Charles. "Well, what say you, my Lord Shaftesbury, is the old man to be squeezed to death?"

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Nell. "One good turn deserves another, and it minds me now thou art the very youth who stood so bravely for me in—well, well!—But, sure, you can easily save the old Jesuit, without offending the veriest scavenger of the mob!"

"As how, madam?" said Shaftesbury, gravely. "I desire not the old fanatic's blood, but—"

"Feign that the wiseacres of the council have discovered matters on which to interrogate the prisoner," interrupted Nell, with a woman's quick wit. "Come, dear king! write me an order on those pestilent sheriffs to surrender the body at your warrant—and send a guard with it."

"Well, we will try—pen and ink here!" said Charles. "But which of my new council will sign it?—Poor Danby!"

"My lord of Monmouth will, on my life?" said Mrs. Gwyn. "Elbow him not, Shaftesbury—I know he will!"

"If his majesty deigns to allow me!" said the duke, submissively.

In three minutes Mervyn was on horseback again, dashing wildly up Newgate Street! He saw confusedly that a crowd had gathered round a ragged boy who was whimpering and sobbing at

the debtors' door. The moment he appeared, the boy darted out, yelling, "Here he is, here he is! Thieves, thieves!"

"Slaves! unhand me—I am a king's messenger!" shouted Mervyn, urging the exhausted animal with a violent plunge to the gate, where it fell vanquished by fatigue. He thundered at the iron door, which was opened instantly, rushed past the jailer shouting, "A reprieve! a reprieve!" and ran with incredible speed through the press-yard, which was still crowded with felons.

Mervyn ran down the stairs leading to the press-room, and his hair seemed to stiffen on his head when, after a moment's dreadful pause, he distinguished no sound, no murmur even of voices! A deadly stillness seemed to reign; but the suspense of that moment seemed more dreadful than any certainty could be. He sprang forward. Profound as was the silence, all were there whom he had left, and by the dim glare of the torches he saw that the Jewish doctor was hanging over something, he dared not look to see what, as if gloating with horrible curiosity.

"How fast you have been!—but it is too late," said Bethel, starting up as the youth thrust the reprieve into his hand.

"Monstrous traitor!—did you not promise me—"

"Only to get you out of the way—it was better for you," replied Bethel, shuddering. "Look, he is almost gone."

He pointed as he spoke to the press, and Mervyn's eye dilated with horror as he followed the direction of the man's hand. Van Huysman lay there under an enormous weight of iron, his face swollen and purple, the blood streaming from his eyes, nose, and ears, seemingly insensible, but convulsions of such power as to shake even the enormous mass on his chest ran over his gaunt limbs.

"Monsters! help in the king's name!" shrieked Mervyn, applying his strength to the vast bulk, in a state of desperation which seemed to give a giant's energy to his exhausted powers.

"It is impossible; the rope is broken!" said Oates, with a devilish smile, pointing to the pulley of the crane which, in anticipation of some such scene, he had privately sawed in two.

"Release him, it is the king's order!" groaned Bethel. "Heaven be praised! I took no part in it, farther than I was bound under penalty of a thousand marks."

The executioner, Bethel, and even Cornish, now added their strength to Mervyn's, and the mass yielded and rolled heavily off the victim's crushed breast. They raised him, but he was almost lifeless, and a dark stream of gore issued from his colourless lips.

"He is not dead!" said the Jew, eagerly presenting himself. "Or—or—let me apply the infallible criterion of Paracelsus!" and applying his mouth to that of the dying man, he drew a small bladder

from his bosom, blew into it, and fastened it with strange avidity.

"Did you not see that, Master Bethel?" whispered Oates. "I have seen him do as much to several. That death-exhalation is one of the ingredients of his grand experiments."

"He is going fast—there's nothing alive of him but the head," said Elkanah, and as he spoke a strong convulsion shook every limb of the dying man, and he opened his eyes, but for several minutes their sense seemed gone, and he gazed glassily at Mervyn, who bathed his whole visage in tears. At last it seemed as if some degree of consciousness returned, and a faint smile played or rather writhed on his lips, and then with a deep sigh he sank quietly back in his pupil's arms, and the yellow effulgence of death past over his face.

And thus departed one of the great spirits of the age, apparently on a petty point of little intrinsic worth or moment, and which yet condensed the warring principles of the times—the doctrine of spiritual exemption from civil power, and the attempt of the catholic church to retrieve her ancient supremacy.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CAMPAIGN IN SCOTLAND..

A FEW days after the tragical event we have just recorded, Mervyn landed at Edinburgh, alone and friendless in the world, at least as it appeared to him in his sorrow and desolation of heart. Before he left London he had fulfilled, as far as possible, the last instructions of his murdered patron. The sheriffs meant to have buried their mangled victim in the precincts of the prison, but Mervyn obtained an order from the king, and interred him in the churchyard of old St. Pancras, according to one of his dying requests, for there had the last mass been celebrated in England, while England was catholic.

In the hurry and confusion of his thoughts on this occasion, he forgot the locket, almost till the moment

when the first shovel of earth fell with a hollow clatter on the coffin; and then recollecting it suddenly, he drew it from his breast, where it had remained from the moment he received it.

Hurried as he was by time and circumstances, Mervyn felt some little emotion of curiosity when he opened the golden case, for he now remembered that Van Huysman had told him it contained the portrait of his mother, as well as of his own unfortunate love. Great, however, was his surprise when, by the flickering light of the grave-diggers' torches, he recognised the features of the Lady Howard, but in the full pride of youth and beauty. Around the rim was a German inscription, of which Mervyn could only make out two names—Eleanor and Adrian. This, however, furnished no additional clue to the mysteries which surrounded him, and he suffered the locket to drop into Van Huysman's grave, with a thorough conviction that with it he buried the last clue to the labyrinth in which he was involved.

Mervyn arrived in Edinburgh at a moment when the various factions which distracted Scotland had rushed into a stormy conflict, which, like a tempest to a sea gull, seemed to offer him the wild repose which troubled spirits find in strenuous action. The murder of Archbishop Sharp; the seizure of Glasgow, and general revolt of the covenanters in the west; the uncertain state of the Highlands, which

the banishment and outlawry of the Earl of Argyll had thrown into ferment;—all these events rendered strong measures imperative, as it needed only a slight gleam of success to rouse the republicans of England to a similar attempt.

Our hero felt little reluctance to leave London—a city in which he had been a witness of so many atrocities, and where the perpetrators were in the full bloom of power and popularity. The Oatesian madness was at its height, arrests, executions, riots, followed each other in rapid succession, and the turbulent city seemed only to rest when gazing at some of those dreadful spectacles which flattered its thirst of blood. Oates was looked upon as little less than a messenger direct from Heaven, with all the lustre of his celestial nature around him. Wherever he went, adoring crowds followed his steps; honours and wealth were heaped upon him, and in the general madness, the brutality of his manners, the profligacy, violence, ill-breeding, and insupportable arrogance of the wretch, were regarded as so many proofs of his divine mission, so many graces of the prophetic character. Numerous victims had bled on the scaffold, and many more awaited the same fate from frantic juries and judges, who dared not oppose the popular fury, lest it should sweep them too away.

One regret indeed, Mervyn had, and one only—the light in which his character must appear to the noble Sydney and his lovely daughter. But as he

felt the utter impossibility of clearing it of any part of the imputations so artfully heaped on him, and was too proud to expose himself to the chance of a mortifying rejection of his advances, he ventured only to thank the colonel for his goodness to him, in a letter which he wrote from Scotland. Whether Sydney received it or not he scarcely knew, but he obtained no reply nor acknowledgment. This, however, he did not wonder at, as his accusations against Sydney's party must have appeared to that pure and high-minded patriot merely a hireling's lies; but it added another bitter sting to those by which his enthusiastic nature was goaded on to a resolution which he took with solemnity on the day of his departure—either to redeem his name in men's opinions, or to perish honourably in the attempt.

And yet what a name! he found that his commission was directed to him as Cornet Mervyn *Blood;* but as he resolutely refused to acknowledge any other name but the first, he was known in the regiment principally by that.

Massey's dragoons, in which he found himself enrolled, was the disorganised remains of one of Cromwell's finest regiments, and scarcely mustered on the whole two hundred men. Of these, a part, to which Mervyn was attached, was shut up in Dumbarton castle, and it was impossible to join them, the whole country being in possession of the rebels. He was rather glad of this, as it gave him a chance

of being present at some general action in which he might distinguish himself. But meanwhile he discovered with surprise the heterogeneous nature of the corps of which he had become a member. The soldiers were nearly all veterans—discontented men who remembered the glories of Cromwell, and their own vast power under his rule, and who only longed for a good opportunity to restore that power, or at least attempt its restoration. The officers on the contrary were to a man royalist; fierce young cavaliers, who had learned nothing in a long exile but the most bitter hatred and contempt of their triumphant enemies. Accordingly, no good understanding existed between the men and their leaders. But this was the policy of the advisers of Charles, who had found it impossible to destroy the old republican army, without at the same time casting it ready moulded into the hands of their antagonists, and therefore took this strange means of neutralizing its tendencies.

Mervyn was exceedingly well received by his brother officers, for his renown as an anti-popish plotter, and *employé* of the court, had preceded him; it was in fact considered that he was a great favourite of the king himself, as well as of the York faction, and likely to be far advanced. Old Massey himself, the colonel, who substituted his own name for that of "Ireton's Lord-seekers," received him with distinguished kindness. He was an old cavalier of the

out-and-out school, that would have died for the crown were it set on a bush, and had been in all the engagements of any consequence between Charles I. and the parliament, beside seeing a great variety of German service under the renowned Monteculi. He was sixty years old, but still a fine weather-beaten veteran, as active as the youngest man in the regiment, and full of all the old opinions, prejudices, and animosities of the civil war. But withal he was a gentleman and a man of refined honour, jealous of its least shade and form; a strict disciplinarian, and a jolly companion, and Mervyn's manners and ideas were much improved and enlarged by a constant intercourse with a man who was esteemed one of the best courtiers and soldiers of his time.

The dragoons, indeed, looked on their new officer with no very favourable eyes, regarding him as a traitor and a spy on the good cause; but his general urbanity and kindliness of manner, and his subsequent displays of chivalrous courage, gradually melted their prejudices; for the English soldier pardons every thing to valour and generosity.

The preparations for marching against the rebels were meanwhile fast going on. The Duke of Monmouth arrived, and all things assumed a new aspect, which denoted the presence of an active and talented master. The lowland militia which formed the body, and the few regular troops which formed the

strength of his army, were already concentrated round Edinburgh, and only waited for instructions to march.

The affairs of Scotland were at that time in a state of extreme and almost irremediable confusion. Distracted by religious and political parties of almost every shade and denomination, the oppressive administration of Lauderdale had for a moment united all in a desperate and open resistance to his tyranny. The gentry whose estates he had confiscated, joined the people whose religion he sought to extirpate, though but few appeared in the ranks of the rebellion. The murder of Sharpe threw down a bloody gage of battle, and suddenly roused the smouldering sparks into a wide blaze of insurrection. The storming of Glasgow followed, and an undisciplined army of covenanters, kept together by enthusiasm and the inability of the government to oppose any adequate force, now kept the field, and threatened Edinburgh itself.

Almost the first news which greeted Monmouth on his arrival, was the defeat of the famous Claverhouse by a party of the rebels. His first desire and intention had been to conciliate these tumultuous victors, and to attract their affection to his own person, with a view to ulterior uses; but this last outrage compelled him into immediate action. The preparations were hastily concluded, and the little

army, not much better disciplined or provided than that which they were to subdue, marched out of Edinburgh.

Mervyn's heart throbbed high when he found himself fairly on the road to glory or death. He was determined it should be one or the other, and in the desperation of his feelings he scarcely cared which. The splendour of war, its "pomp and circumstance," even on this small scale, made his heart bound with military enthusiasm, and the high war-like blood of his ancient race, though he knew it not, rushed with wild delight through his veins, like a young war-steed's at the trumpet-blast.

Vast crowds witnessed the departure of the little army, and every point of vantage of the ancient rock-built city was crowned with eager spectators, who greeted them with loud hurrahs and fervent prayers for their safe return. And as Mervyn joined the splendid suite of officers, who thronged to pay their respects to the Duke of Monmouth, and saw how coldly his leader's eye dwelt upon him, he inwardly determined that he would extort admiration and applause even from him, or win himself a place where the smiles of kings and generals are as ineffectual as their frowns.

Edinburgh and its tower-crowned rocks were speedily left behind, and the army defiled into the plains of West Lothian. The march was of course directed on Glasgow, in which city the rebels

had strengthened themselves, but such was their confidence and rashness that it was expected they would march out and meet the royal army on a stricken field. This opinion was confirmed by the scouts, and the army therefore, advanced cautiously, and entering Lanark, arrived within sight of the enemy on the 22nd of June.

The covenanters occupied a strong position covering the road to Glasgow, protected by the waters of the Clyde, and the Bridge of Bothwell, which they had barricaded. The duke's army halted on the opposite bank, and a council of war was immediately summoned, to hear his instructions read, which had been hitherto sealed even from his own knowledge, at the instigation of the York faction. These were soon found to be positive and not to be eluded, directing him not to treat with the rebels so long as they had arms in their hands; and a battle was therefore at once determined on. Some overtures from the covenanters were rejected by Monmouth, though with mildness, and the only conditions were declared to be, immediate surrender. The covenanters were thus cut off from all hopes of treaty, preparations commenced on both sides for an obstinate encounter, and Massey's dragoons were ordered to the front, almost facing the bridge.

It was now mid-day, and the sun, though surrounded by thick dark clouds, shone in a long slanting torrent of light on the covenanters' position,

which extended along the stream, having Bothwell Briggs for its centre. They had fortified a stone sheep-cote in the manner of a redoubt on the opposite side of the bridge, and the rapidity of the waters, and the strength of the barricades of trees and carts, seemed to make it a matter of great difficulty to force their position. In the distance Mervyn discerned the towers and steeples of Glasgow, and nearer at hand, the massive old castle of Bothwell, embosomed in its forests and morasses.

The appearance of the warriors who were to defend this position was curiously miscellaneous. Mervyn perceived no signs of military order and regularity. One large group seemed collected round a preacher who was holding forth on the top of a barrel; others seemed busy at their private devotions; but the greater part were engaged in cooking, and in cleaning old matchlocks.

The royal banner was now displayed, and Monmouth appeared on horseback, with a brilliant staff, and rode along the lines, exhorting the men to courage and order. Half an hour's grace had been allowed to the covenanters to send in their submission, and an hour had elapsed, and as the duke arrived before Massey's position, Grahame of Claverhouse galloped up to tell him so.

"Let us do nothing in a hurry, sir," replied the duke, reining in his horse. "Send a trumpeter to

inquire their final determination, and then we will act."

"I will go, my lord, an it please you," said Mervyn, eagerly.

"Go, then, sir," replied the duke, in a cold and almost contemptuous manner.

Mervyn dashed his spurs into his steed, and in a moment was on the bridge, waving his hand in token of parley; but a rattle of musketry warned him to retire, and he galloped back to the duke, with a flushed cheek and sparkling eye, which seemed for a moment to excite his attention.

"So, sir!—we have witnessed your success," he said, with a sneer, and as he spoke a shower of balls rattled among the leaves of an oak under which he stood; but the duke moved not a muscle, and his well-trained war-horse merely pricked its ears. Mervyn, smilingly, lifted his hat, which was perforated with a ball, and looking earnestly at the enemy, exclaimed, "If your grace will give me leave to treat with them in another manner, I doubt not to bring you better tidings!"

"Clear me the bridge then, Massey," said the duke reluctantly at last. "Grahame will back you."

"I will back no man, my lord, where I can be the first," replied that fiery chief, with a dark flush; but Massey seemed to be of a similar opinion, and

spurring his horse, with a loud hurrah, which was echoed by his officers, and not by the men, he galloped recklessly forward, followed by the troop. In a moment they were on the bridge, and Mervyn was abreast with his fiery old colonel. But a serious and determined resistance awaited them. Clouds of musketry enveloped every thing, and a sharp hand to hand combat took place around the barricades, which were densely crowded with pikemen and musketeers.

Suddenly Mervyn saw that Massey's horse was struck with a ball on the chest; and maddened with pain and terror, the animal reared and plunged with such violence that it was with difficulty the colonel kept his seat. Meanwhile, a powerful covenanter was pressing furiously upon him. Mervyn spurred his horse between, and engaged with the antagonist, but he had the horror to witness at the same moment that the colonel's desperate charger leaped the parapet of the bridge into the river.

He had no time to render any assistance; a new rush of combatants swept him away from his antagonist, and he found that the dragoons were giving way on every side. At this moment he felt that the crisis of his fate had arrived, and reckless of life or death, he rushed into the midst of the covenanters, shouting "England for ever!—Iretons, remember *Dunbar!*"

It seemed as if these words contained some magic

spell of old recollections. The dragoons returned with fury to the charge, and after a momentary conflict carried the bridge, with an impetuosity which nothing could withstand. The whole field was flooded with a general rout, and the covenanters fled in every direction, a confused and yelling mob, in spite of the valiant efforts of a few of their leaders.

By this time the duke's whole army, with himself at the head, had crossed the bridge, but every vestige of resistance had disappeared. Mervyn was first in the pursuit as well as in the charge, and it was not until he had ridden nearly a mile beyond the bridge, capturing at pleasure, and hewing down those who persisted in flight, that he felt he was himself wounded. He grew suddenly sick and faint, and felt an acute pain in his left arm, which, on examination, he found severely wounded with a claymore. His horse, too, was exhausted, and he thought it best to return and have his wound bound, for the blood was welling fast from it. He saw a party of horsemen collected about the bridge-head, and thither he directed his way.

On arriving, he found it was the Duke of Monmouth, and several officers, looking at what, to Mervyn's great sorrow, he recognised as the body of Colonel Massey, lying half in the stream, and the other half crushed beneath the dead carcass of his horse, on the margin where they had fallen. He

advanced, and respectfully congratulated the duke on his victory. It was some moments before the duke appeared to recognise him, so covered was he with blood and dust, but Claverhouse exclaiming that it was the victor of the day, the duke held out his hand, and shook Mervyn's very heartily.

"You have proved yourself a most gallant soldier, sir," he said, with a smile of singular sweetness, "and since we have lost your brave commander, I know not how we can better fill his place than by appointing you to command the troops you have so bravely led, with the rank of captain—at least as far as our power extends," he added, with a cloud on his brow, "for they have confined and crippled me in every direction."

Mervyn bowed his acknowledgments, for his heart gushed too full to speak. It was then, for the first time, that Monmouth perceived he was wounded, or that Mervyn recollected it himself. The duke ordered him to retire to his own tent, and directed his surgeons to attend him. Monmouth was a man of sudden impulses, but not deficient in political sagacity, and he perceived that while this appointment was likely to be approved at court, it would conciliate to his cause a daring and adventurous spirit, which he had many other reasons to dread.

Mervyn's wound was not deep, and in a few weeks he was ready to take his new command of

poor Massey's dragoons. The duke graciously confirmed his former gift, mentioned him with distinguished encomiums in his despatches, and though he had not yet received any mandates from London, appointed Mervyn to the command of Dumbarton Castle, then the centre of one of the most disturbed districts.

The defeat at Bothwell Briggs crushed the strength of the covenanters, but not their resistance. The flames of rebellion were rather scattered than extinguished, but the royal army marched on without resistance to Glasgow. Thence Monmouth distributed a few garrisons in various directions, and returned in great triumph to Edinburgh.

Thrown thus on his own resources, in the midst of a wild country and a turbulent population, Mervyn's character began to display its nobler qualities, and to acquire the strength and decision of maturer years. Perched in the rocky castle of Dumbarton, overlooking a wide plain bordered by the almost savage Highlands of Argyleshire, which at that time were almost unknown to the English, he watched the motions of an enemy, of unconquerable zeal and obstinacy. The least spark falling among the scattered embers might rekindle the flames of war, and Mervyn had to trample them out as fast as they appeared; and he executed his task with an energy and humanity which excited the admiration even of his enemies.

Many months past in this fatiguing employment and he continued to receive the duke's approbation, but no confirmation of his appointment. Monmouth accounted for this by asserting that the Duke of York, considering him as having deserted to his nephew's faction, refused to sanction it, but at the same time dared not openly disapprove or annul it.

News from the centre of the political struggle, London, reached the remote garrison of Dumbarton but seldom, and then it was not of the most cheerful nature to the duke's faction. The fury of the plot was beginning to subside, the populace were glutted with blood and showed some weariness of their unholy food. The cloud of witnesses which appeared, encouraged by Oates's success, being all men of infamous character and manners, rather diminished than strengthened the credibility of his revelations. The continued absence of all tangible proofs, all outward substance to the dreadful shadow he had raised, excited general suspicions as to its existence at all; but sixteen victims had perished by a shameful and terrible death, ere the acquittal of Sir George Wakeman gave the first great blow to the plot. The blood of the aged Stafford was still indeed to be poured on the scaffold for an imaginary crime; but that execution closed the line of judicial murders, and the revulsion which popular opinion now sustained, began to act upon the authors and

abettors of the diabolical state craft. This odium fell in some measure upon the innocent members of the popular party also, and prepared the way for the severe retaliation which Charles afterwards inflicted.

The Duke of Buckingham had meanwhile abandoned the court, and gone over to the Whigs, with his usual versatility, and was now one of its bitterest enemies, stimulated no doubt by some private pique, much more than by the patriotism he affected. Mervyn would have taken little note of this circumstance, but for its connexion with that man who called himself his father. Blood had for some time enjoyed the post of regular court-bully, and, doubtless, to gratify the hatred of the court against the apostate duke, he had suborned some ruffians to accuse him of a crime, of which he was not perhaps innocent. But the duke turned the tables with the weight of his purse, and the informers confessed their subornation. Blood was immediately held to bail, and a premunire issued against him. Then he was tried, found guilty, and visited with all the punishments of *scandalum magnatum;* he was amerced in a fine of ten thousand pounds, and took refuge from this enormous penalty in the bounds of the King's Bench.

Mervyn was not much affected with the misfortunes of his worthy father, and he was, besides, almost absorbed in the difficulties and dangers of his own position. Rumours were rife that the court

had so far recovered from its panic, as to project a dismissal of the Shaftesbury ministry, and the recall of the Duke of Monmouth. The prospect of Lauderdale's return again excited commotions and petty insurrections, which, though not dangerous, were harassing, and a dark cloud of war seemed gathering in the western Highlands, where the numerous and powerful clan of Argyle bore with impatience the continued banishment of their chief.

In this state of things, Mervyn received, with extreme surprise, an order from Monmouth and his council, to march to Inverary, the great stronghold of the Campbells, situated in the heart of their wild fastnesses, there to arrest the earl, who, it was stated, had returned among his people, in defiance of the government and law.

Mervyn had good reasons for the very great surprise with which he received this command. In the first place, the object could be easily frustrated by the earl's departure, or by secreting himself among his devoted clansmen. In the next place, it was almost impossible to be accomplished. To penetrate into those wild fastnesses, through passes which could be defended against a powerful army by a few resolute men, and, with the slender forces which he could muster, to overcome the numerous and valiant clan of Argyle, seemed a Quixotism to attempt. A larger force would, on the other hand, run great risk of starvation; for the Highlanders

were rich only in cattle, and a few skirmishers could cut off the supplies of a whole host. But supposing that these important matters were put to the venture, another danger occurred — that the covenanters would rise in his absence, and wrest Dumbarton from the slender force which he could leave behind to protect it.

Imperative as his orders were, Mervyn ventured, on these considerations, to delay obedience, and wrote his objections to the council. He was answered in an exceedingly flattering, but resolute tone, by the duke himself. He assured him that he was forced to the measure by the outcries of the Lauderdale faction, who accused him of winking at the earl's residence in the Highlands. In the next place, there was no danger of resistance on the part of the Campbells: the Countess of Argyle, who ruled them in her husband's absence, had declared her innocence, and offered to submit to any investigation of the king's officers. To obviate the apprehension of the covenanters, the duke authorized him to raise the militia of Glasgow, and leave his castle in the custody of their captain. He further piqued his pride by representing that the great Montrose had invaded and conquered Argyle with a force almost as inadequate as his own, and in the depth of winter, whereas it was now the close of a fine summer. Finally, he left him no resource but to march or throw up his commission.

Mervyn felt that something ulterior was meant under this fair outside show, which he could not yet fathom; for the man appointed to hold Dumbarton during his absence was notoriously a favourer of the covenant. But as his instructions were so positive, he had no resource but a reluctant obedience.

END OF VOL. II.

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